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CONTENTS

COMMENTS . . . . . Page 149
THE TOOLS AND THE JOB . . . 151
HEADING—FOR WHAT? 152
A LONDON DIARY 153
THIS ENGLAND 154
BALKAN HOLIDAY. By Sagittarius . 154
THE CASE OF THE CHINESE SEAMEN . 154
THE LUCK OF THE WEATHER. By Paraj 155
ON A DAY. By Y. Y. 156
THE PINK DECADE. By A. Calder-Marshall 157
SOME COMMENTS ON SIBELIUS. By Edward Sackville West . . . 158
A SEPARATION. By Stephen Spender . 159
THE MOVIES. By William Whitebait . 159
PLAYS AND PICTURES 160
CORRESPONDENCE 160
From J. S. Middleton; John Parker, M.P.; Stephen Spender; Wilfred Wellock; Joan Buckman; W. E. Williams; Nancy Newbigin.
BOOKS IN GENERAL. By V. S. Pritchett 162
REVIEWS:
Inquest on Geneva. By Leonard Woolf 162
Reviews—*contd.* Page
Family Portrait. By Raymond Mortimer 164
War Aims. By Francis Williams . 166
The People's Army. By George Orwell 168
London Streets. By G. W. Stonier 168
The Pattern of Mathematics. By Arthur Waley 169
SHORTER NOTICES 170
WEEK-END COMPETITIONS 170
CROSSWORD 170
THE WEEK IN THE CITY. By Urbanus 171

THE INITIATIVE

THIS week the initiative belonged to the British, on land, at sea and in the air. In Africa the Army of the Nile completed the occupation of Cyrenaica while the Free French from Lake Chad raided the oasis of Koufra: the Navy bombarded Genoa and Ostend and the R.A.F. was active over Germany, while the *Luftwaffe* left this island almost undisturbed. But no one supposes that this lull is anything more than a pause before the enemy springs with renewed momentum. But where will he strike? Is he reconditioning his bomber-planes to deliver the mass-attack on our cities that may be the prelude to invasion? Will his tanks cross the Balkans to fall upon the Greeks? Or will Spain step forward into the militant van of the Axis? We do not know, but for any of these moves and even for all of them together we must be prepared.

In Libya an astonishing campaign reached a climax as startling as the opening battle fought two months ago on Egyptian soil. The Italians allowed our main forces to occupy the provincial capital of Benghazi virtually without opposition, while their army of 16,000 men set out on the long trek over the single coast road to Tripolitania. By forced marches over desert tracks our mechanised column anticipated the retreating enemy, lay in wait for him round Soluch and compelled him after a two days' battle to capitulate. While the Italians are said to have fought harder in this engagement than in any other, the fact seems to be that they surrendered to a British force which they out-numbered in men and tanks by five to one. The province of Cyrenaica will now be organised under General Wilson as military governor. There is no hint of what we intend to do with it eventually: its Arab population, always backward and decimated by Graziani's cruelties, is hardly capable of taking charge of its future. Nor can we guess whether General Wavell will now press on across the forbidding desert of Syrte to capture Tripolitania: with naval aid the thing could be done, for this enemy can offer little resistance. On the other hand, the Greeks may soon need our help at Salonica. From Eritrea and Abyssinia there is little to report, save that the R.A.F. has been active and that two fresh thrusts have been made near the Red Sea coast from the Sudan into Italian territory.

While we were all watching the Western Mediterranean with some anxiety, the navy has reminded us that it is still master of that threatened sea. The bombardment of Genoa by two capital ships, while the Fleet's air-arm bombed the railway juncture at Pisa, demonstrated Italian impotence. But it may have been intended to disorganise the port which the Germans would use if they ever try to send a force to occupy Bizerta. It seems clear that their dive-bombers, after a first success in the Sicilian Channel are no longer a serious menace to our Fleet. As Mr. Churchill told us on Sunday, ninety out of 150 of these craft were destroyed in one attack on Malta.

We have next to fit into the complicated pattern the story of the German political initiative that failed. For the time being the Nazis have failed to impose their French Quisling on Vichy. Exactly what happened last week while Admiral Darlan ran to and fro between Vichy and Paris we do not yet know. It is probable that Laval demanded reinstatement with full dictatorial powers over foreign and internal policy. Had he got these, he would have tried to use them to hand over the French Fleet with Bizerta to the Germans. Marshal Pétain offered him instead a decorative post: he should be minister without portfolio in an inner council so composed that all real authority would belong to Admiral Darlan and General Huntziger. This Laval refused. Thereupon Marshal Pétain took a decision. He got rid altogether of that minor Quisling, M. Flandin, and made Admiral Darlan his Grand Vizier and successor. This cannot be called a victory for democracy, for the Admiral has not even a shadowy claim to be regarded as the choice of the popular will. But it is a set-back for Germany. So long as the Nazis acquiesce in the rejection of their nominee Laval, the French Fleet and Bizerta are safe. But no one who has watched Hitler for long will suppose that this is the end of the story.

A new chapter in this Mediterranean drama opened when it was announced that General Franco and Señor Suñer are about to meet the Duce on the Franco-Italian frontier. It is expected that they will also call on their old friend and political sympathiser Marshal Pétain; at a different moment of history it would be assumed that this was

merely a visit of courtesy. But to-day it occurs with Hitler's assent, if not at his instigation. What is the purpose of this meeting of the Latin bloc? There are several guesses. It may be that Mussolini will ask for the repayment in some form of the debt of honour that Fascist Spain owes to Fascist Italy. Precisely how? Franco might be asked to bottle up the Western Mediterranean by closing the Straits of Gibraltar, presumably with German support. He might also embarrass the recalcitrant French by pressure on Morocco. Nothing, so far as we know, suggests that Franco is more disposed to risk belligerency than he was. The other current guess, that the Duce will ask Franco to negotiate a separate peace for him may be dismissed as wishful thinking. In sentiment, a Latin-Catholic block, composed of Mussolini, Franco and Pétain, is conceivable and may even exist in the dream-world of aspiration, but can it mean anything actual while the power of the Nazis remains intact?

At the other end of the Mediterranean we may be on the eve of a new phase. Mr. Churchill in his broadcast on Sunday prepared us for a German march into Bulgaria. The belief that it is imminent accounts for the withdrawal of our embassy from Rumania. That country could be attacked from the air, if it becomes the base for a Nazi drive to the South. The evidence shows that Hitler is rapidly mobilising troops and material for the occupation of Bulgaria. Bulgarian sentiment is divided, for the officers are pro-German, while the peasant mass is still traditionally Russophile and the Communist Party exerts a good deal of influence in the villages. But Russia seems unlikely to run any risk in vetoing a German move. It is a fact that she has suggested a pact of mutual assistance, but no one is sure that this gesture of sympathy ever amounted to an offer of military aid. In any event King Boris and Professor Filoff cling to their policy of inert neutrality: they will stand alone till they fall alone. The Turkish press still threatens military intervention if Greece should be attacked, and no one doubts that the inclination of the Government will be to defend the approaches to the Straits, but it is fatally easy for a neutral in such a situation to postpone action and hope for the best.

Cabinet Appointments

Looking back on the story of the last war we see that the ideas, the capacity and the outlook of the few men at the top were of supreme importance, but that the personalities and abilities of other Ministers were of far less importance than those of men who only ranked as Civil Servants. The men who reorganised Government departments were seldom the old-established Civil Servants; they were rather newcomers of the calibre of Sir William Beveridge, Mr. Frank Wise, Mr. E. H. M. Lloyd and Sir Arthur Salter. Some of these men are now at length back in similar positions, bringing their wealth of experience and knowledge to the job of reorganisation. With this story in mind we may be rather less critical of some of the new appointments to the Government. With Mr. MacDonald's departure to Canada Mr. Ernest Brown moves to the Ministry of Health. No one has ever suggested that Mr. Brown was an unqualified success at the Ministry of Labour which Mr. Bevin declared on November 27th he had found in chaos. But Mr. Brown may well do better at the Ministry of Health; he has energy and real knowledge of the social problems that he will be required to handle. Mr. Tom Johnston is a natural appointment as Secretary for Scotland, and amongst the other names we notice with satisfaction that Mr. Tomlinson goes to a Ministry where his special knowledge will find full scope. The oddest appointment is that of the Duke of Norfolk. It cannot be thought that he adds anything to the strength of the team which is now supposed to be organising British agriculture to the highest point of efficiency, and one must assume that the Duke's appointment is considered of importance rather from the point of view of national unity than from that of feeding the nation. As head of the Catholic aristocracy, Earl Marshal and Chief Butler of this realm, the inclusion of the Duke in the Government will be popular in Roman Catholic circles and amongst the well-born. It may not be particularly unpopular in some Labour circles.

The Future of the Colonies

Lord Moyne might prove to be a sensible choice for the Colonial Office. He was first associated with Colonial affairs, when he was sent on a financial mission to Kenya in 1932, but it is with his work as chairman of the West Indian Royal Commission that his name is most closely connected. Though the report of this Commission was suppressed, its recommendations were published about a year ago, and received general approbation for their breadth of vision and human approach to the unhappy problems of the West Indies. The gist of the recommendations was that £1,000,000 should be given each year for West Indian development, and that the islanders should be granted true democratic representation in their Governments. These proposals were linked up with the passing of the Colonial Development and Welfare Act last May, and Lord Moyne must certainly have been connected with the formulation of this Act and the very progressive statement of policy which preceded it. The Act has been acclaimed as a milestone in British Imperial history. It boldly accepted the British tax-payers' responsibility to secure a reasonable standard of well-being for Colonial peoples, and granted £5,000,000 a year for ten years as free gifts to the Colonies for social services and development projects. About £1,000,000 of this was to go to the West Indies, as Lord Moyne suggested. Nearly a year has elapsed and little of these plans has been realised. Difficulties of supply are pleaded as the excuse for holding up development projects needing imported equipment. The Comptroller of Development for the West Indies has been appointed and is on the spot, but he is still "studying conditions" and has warned us against the expectation of immediate results. On the question of political reform, a first step was taken only a few weeks ago, when a new Constitution was announced for Trinidad. But this Constitution is so feeble an affair that, far from welcoming it, informed opinion is only fearful that similar instalments of "democracy" might be extended to the other islands. It was Lord Moyne, let it not be forgotten, who advocated a real extension of democracy to the West Indies. Will he, as Colonial Secretary, be content with this travesty of his ideas?

The Humbug of Finance

Our economic thinking is still bedevilled by what Mr. Keynes calls the humbug of finance. For example, the confusion about the real and the money cost of the war still goes on. Lord Simon was continuously guilty of the fallacy when Chancellor, and the *Times* has now repeated the error. "It was very properly decided long before the outbreak of war," says the *Times*, "that it would not be just to this generation to ask them to sustain the whole burden." It may have been properly decided, but the decision was futile. It cannot be too often emphasised that the division between taxation and borrowing has nothing whatever to do with the real burden of the war. If gifts or loans in kind from abroad are ignored all the real sacrifice is being made *now* by the people of this country. The labour and steel which go into a gun are going in now, and that labour and steel are being diverted from other potential uses. Whether the gun is paid for by taxation or out of borrowing makes no difference. The future generation will be no better or no worse off however the financial allocation is made. There will be a different distribution of money income inside the community, but its real position will be unaffected. The sole reason for not raising the whole money cost by taxation is the problematical effect on incentive during the war. The chief loss to posterity is the absence of additions to capital equipment during the war years. They will inherit fewer houses, fewer cinemas, fewer factories, but that will happen whether wartime borrowing covers 0 per cent., 10 per cent., 50 per cent. or 100 per cent. of the money costs. Similarly the collection of money now from property owners under the War Damage scheme will have no effect either way on our capacity to rebuild after the war. Our capacity to reconstruct will depend solely on the labour and equipment available to work at the end of hostilities, and those physical factors will be the same whether the internal national debt is £10,000 millions or £20,000 millions. Germany was financially bankrupt in 1923 and in 1940 she was in a position to wage a colossal war. What she did for warlike ends she could have done for peaceful aims. If we do not lose too many lives and too much capital equipment we shall be able to produce real goods on the same scale as before. In fact, if we refuse to tolerate unemployment we can do better.

Economic Notes (*from Our Industrial Correspondent*)

Critic pointed out last week how disastrous it would be if the problems of reconstruction were left to be handled on departmental lines, with each department making plans for the matters falling directly within its sphere of action, and each taking the utmost care not to tread on the toes of the others. For, along those lines, nothing

can possibly happen except a futile attempt to put things back pretty much as they were. Each department will be bound to take the old social structure as a starting point, and to act on the assumption that it has to respect the old private rights; and the result will be that instead of a new Britain we shall get a sham-antique Britain, as out of place in the post-war world as the Tory statesmen who will try to make themselves the rulers of it—of course, with the Labour men loyally co-operating in the name of national unity. This is most obvious when one considers the rebuilding of our bombed cities; for there the absurdity of putting the old muddles back is most undeniable. But it really applies to almost every aspect of reconstruction.

* * *

Some people, I know, argue that it is premature to begin tackling such problems as these now. But they are being tackled, necessarily, in the War Damage Bill; and if that Bill goes through without anything being said about the future ownership of the land, and this public ownership is proposed at a later stage, a cry will go up that the State is breaking faith. Moreover, planning is going to be a difficult matter, and is bound to take a long time; and unless we get the plans made, literally, years before they have to be carried out, there will be no end of a muddle. We ought to be getting ready now to turn over a vast quantity of labour from munition-making to building the very moment the war ends; and, if we do that without advance plans of what and where we mean to build, the only course open will be to rebuild on the old sites, and to use the existing authorities and contractors as agents. I am convinced that regional and not local authorities will be needed to take charge of the work within a general national plan, and that the State itself ought to organise the supply of all the essential materials (in order to prevent a price-ramp and reduce costs), and ought further to create regional Building Corporations to undertake a large part of the actual work of construction.

* * *

All this, important as it is, is only one aspect of the reconstruction problem. The sorts of houses we shall want, and the places where we shall want them, depend on such factors as the future location of industry, the age of retirement and the size of the pensions granted to the old or disabled, the existence or absence of a system of family allowances, and in general the income structure of the new society for which we propose to build. Houses last so long that it will be disastrous if they are built in the wrong places, or of the wrong sorts in relation to the future needs of the people. Anyone who is to plan post-war Britain must start from a general notion of both industrial and social structure as they are likely to be.

* * *

Can Arthur Greenwood convince the country that he is the man for a job of this order? If so, he must display qualities very different from those which he revealed while he was Chairman of the Production Council. In that capacity, he showed no power to stand up to opposition, or to do more than receive the reports of a number of committees which were left almost wholly without co-ordinating control. Yet Greenwood used to have some conception of what planning means; and I can remember him during the last war, while he was at the Ministry of Reconstruction, full of excellent ideas which he would have enjoyed putting into effect if he had possessed the power. The fact that he has now been put in charge of reconstruction *because* the Cabinet does not take it seriously ought to stimulate him, if anything can, to give his critics the lie.

* * *

It is manifest that, if we are to rebuild our cities aright, we ought to plan them; and planning is inconsistent with rebuilding on the old sites or under conditions which will allow each owner of a patch of land to do with it what he wills, subject only to the negative restraint of local by-laws. After the last war, no big problem of rebuilding faced Great Britain; for air-raid damage was insignificant. But a large-scale problem did confront France, in the areas devastated by prolonged warfare. The French did rebuild largely on the old sites, and without adequate planning; and we shall be wise to profit by their mistakes in the towns of Northern France. The first thing to do, as was pointed out in a recent article in this journal, is to make the land public property, in order to get away from the irrationality of the existing surface ownerships, and so make possible a comprehensive planning which will not be affected by vested interests in the values of particular sites. Unless we do this, everyone whose land may be reduced in value by replanning will come clamouring for compensation, whereas everyone who profits by it will keep tight hold of the benefits. Whereas, if we nationalise the land, it will not matter if land values fall in one place and rise in another. Gains will offset losses; and no valid claims for special compensation will arise.

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THE TOOLS AND THE JOB

MR. CHURCHILL reserves his speeches to the nation for special occasions; when he spoke on Sunday it was to reveal that he had lost nothing of his old vivacity and gusto. It was a speech in which warnings were blended with congratulation, and in one brief sentence he made a remarkable declaration involving a vital issue of policy. He informed our American allies that Britain was confident of being able to win this war without the aid, now or at any forseeable time, of their man-power. This statement is inconsistent with former pronouncements of the Prime Minister, and it inevitably raises the most far-reaching speculations about the strategy of this war. Mr. Churchill, it may be said, was necessarily so concerned with the immediate and urgent need of "all help short of war" that he felt it wise to reassure those numerous people in America who fear the thought of another expeditionary force. Even so, the fact remains that by this statement Mr. Churchill has ruled out Britain's right to ask for American troops. The result of this plain statement may be to remove some of that emotional conflict that confuses and embitters discussions of these issues to-day in the United States just as it confused and embittered them in Britain in the period before the war. The American press greeted Mr. Churchill's speech with enthusiasm, and the United States is now likely to display a new unanimity and concentration in providing—to use Mr. Churchill's euphemisms—"the tools" while we do "the job."

A statement of this importance can scarcely have been made by a British Prime Minister at such a time as a mere matter of tactics and without consideration of its further implications. If the reinforcement of American man-power is held to be unnecessary, on what factors, military, economic or political, is Britain relying for victory over an enemy whose troops must at least outnumber hers by two to one? We take it that Germany can place in the field about ten million men, while even if British man-power is mobilised to an extent that endangers production, five millions must be about the limit of her armed forces. Some of Germany's troops must be dispersed to hold conquered territories, while others must watch her Eastern frontiers. Britain must make similar, if smaller, deductions. The Italians, if they remain in the war at all, cannot be reckoned as first-line troops. It is doubtful whether they are now to be considered an embarrassment or a subsidiary force able to relieve German troops from non-combatant duties. But the most cursory glance reveals that on the score of man-power alone, Britain must dismiss at once the thought of an ambitious Continental offensive against such odds. Germany occupies a central position with good communications radiating in all directions, which means that with little delay she should be able to throw a superior force against any British army of invasion. Numbers are not decisive in modern warfare: but it is hardly likely that we can greatly surpass the Germans in mechanisation. It may be argued that the superior air-power on which we are counting, when we receive all the "tools" America can make, will enable us to disorganise German industry and communications to a degree that we have not ourselves experienced while we were the weaker of the two in the air. Or it may be predicted that our blockade will bring about in the third year a crippling shortage of oil and other military materials. These may be important factors, but can we reckon on them with such confidence that we can rely on such factors alone to outweigh a superiority of two to one? Clearly not.

There remains the possibility of "amphibious" warfare on which some expert students of military history rely. Undoubtedly it presents opportunities which we should be the last to minimise. A daring and ingenious use of sea-power may enable us to conduct some victorious offensives on land in relatively isolated fields, but not in the main European area. The Libyan campaign is a perfect model for such operations. We can imagine several similar exploits—apart from mere raids. Norway and Sicily are possible objectives, and with Turkish help the Balkan Peninsula might become such a field. Some of us have had it in mind that if Franco should be dragged into the war, the Spanish Peninsula might play in Hitler's decline the part it played in Napoleon's. But that illustration brings us up against the limitations of this method. It is true that the exhausting Peninsular War helped to destroy Napoleon, but only because his main powers had first bled to death on the retreat from Moscow and then suffered a crushing defeat at Leipzig. In that war we had powerful allies. Again, in Spain, Wellington's expeditionary force, which never mustered more than 30,000 men, supplied the shock troops; but the Spaniards, gallant as always, were the main body of the armies that defeated Soult. But where in this war, even if the Turks should join the Greeks, have we the allies capable of

another Leipzig? Nor have we as yet discovered the political dynamic that might rally the Spanish people behind a British vanguard. In short, from a daring and successful conduct of amphibious warfare we might hope to win some counters of real value, if our aim were to conclude a compromise peace, but we could not hope in this way to free Europe from the Nazi yoke. The ablest advocate of this strategy, "T124," in his book, *Sea-Power*, has been perfectly frank, for he scoffs at any such purpose and rejects the idea that we are under any obligation to rescue Czechs, Poles or even Frenchmen.

Here, surely, he puts the issue on ground that is both misleading and dangerous. For a peace that abandoned the Continent while Hitler dominates it would not merely leave the Poles and Czechs to their fate; it would also be a precarious truce which would last until Hitler had either undermined British independence or was ready for a surprise attack. We should not long survive against a solidly organised Nazi Empire.

No one has faced these problems with more courage or honesty than Mr. Churchill. Clearly he does not believe in a compromise with Hitler; clearly, on the evidence of his broadcast, he does not envisage a conquering offensive against a Nazi Europe. On what then does he rely for victory? Superior air-power and the slow aid of the blockade should play their part; the disillusion with Hitler in Germany and the detestation of the Nazis throughout conquered Europe assure us of potent allies when the time is ripe. The defeat of an actual attempt at invasion would do something to break the physical power of the German war-machine: alternatively the proof that he dare not attempt it would weaken German morale, give the opportunity to encourage discontent and revolt and make possible expeditions which are now impossible.

It would seem to follow—and it is here that Mr. Churchill gives us no lead—that everything should be done now not only to prepare against invasion but also to weaken this solidly organised tyranny from within. Eventual success demands two equally necessary conditions: (1) The more virile part of the subject populations must be ready to give our invading army active support and (2) a considerable part of the German people and army must at least acquiesce in the prospect of a British victory, if it does not welcome it. In brief, we have first to make our conception of freedom with order for Europe so attractive that some Frenchmen will fight for it, while some Germans in days of stress will rather lay down their arms than resist it; we have next to organise our propaganda, and our underground cadres which will sabotage, strike and eventually rise to aid our advance. As yet we have taken no significant step in the long slow effort of preparation, while we have done a good deal to prejudice our success. It was a bold and confident gesture to renounce the aid of an American army. History will applaud us, only if at the same moment we begin with method and imagination to recruit instead of it our European legions.

HEADING—FOR WHAT?

WITH all the increase in State control that has occurred in Great Britain since September, 1939, are we getting nearer Socialism? Or are we, on the contrary, heading straight for Fascism, of our own peculiar British brand? To all intents and purposes, the State, and not the private employer, now dictates the volume and character of output, not only in the war industries, but almost equally in those which provide for ordinary civil consumption. The State controls the supplies of all the essential materials of industry, the allocation of shipping space for imports, and, where it sees the necessity, the use of scarce kinds of machinery and labour. The State, using the banks as its instruments, can create money practically at will: it controls all foreign exchange and can direct the course of foreign trade. The State can order any workman to go and work where it wants him to work: it can requisition any factory or other building, or any stock of finished goods or parts, or indeed anything it pleases. The State, through the B.B.C. and the censorship controls the sources of information. Through its Regional Commissioners it has taken over many functions which used to belong to the sphere of local government. The State has power to shut people up without trial, to stop public meetings, and to put people on trial for a host of new wartime offences against itself. And finally, Parliament, under a Coalition Government of all the leading parties, now functions without an organised Opposition.

Are these the signs of an approach to Socialism, or to Fascism? The true answer is that they are in themselves neither, but conditions forced upon us by the necessities of war, and capable of being given either a Socialist or a Fascist turn. In part, they are just war measures, which will survive or not survive the war emergency according to the character of the social forces dominating the country at the end of the war. But another, and a vitally important, part of them consists of measures which will assuredly outlast the war, and become the basis of the new post-war social order, whoever wins, and whatever social forces rule Great Britain in the coming time.

It can be taken as certain that, in post-war Britain, there will be no return to capitalism of the old sort. Pre-war Britain was in a condition of industrial anarchy which will never be allowed to return. British industry was divided into three sectors—one governed by well-entrenched and privileged monopolies which had mastered the art of sustaining profits by the concerted limitation of output, with the State's help when it was needed for the coercion of recalcitrants; a second in sheer confusion, because it had not been able to take effective measures for the "rationalisation" of output on these lines; and a third, in which the demand was still expanding, able to carry on under *laissez-faire* conditions without resorting to restriction as an habitual policy. Only this third sector was in tolerable shape; and some of the industries included in it owed their expanding profitableness largely to protection from foreign competitors.

To the first sector belonged coal-mining, shipbuilding, iron and steel, chemicals, cement, and a number of other industries; to the second cotton, and indeed most of the textile trades, except artificial silk; to the third belonged the motor trades, artificial silk, electrical engineering, to a large extent building, printing, boot and shoe manufacture and the clothing trades, and a number of smaller new industries catering for an expanding consumers' market. It was plain that the industries in the second group were destined, if the existing trends continued, to pass over into the first—witness the Cotton Control Scheme that was on the point of being established when war broke out. Agriculture also belonged largely to the first group, and seemed destined to belong to it entirely before long. Railways and road passenger transport and shipping were also in the first group; and goods transport by road seemed likely before long to join them. Electricity supply, only partly ordered by the Central Electricity Board, was being dominated more and more by a few great generating concerns, which were buying up the smaller companies and making rings round the smaller municipal concerns. The distributive trades, having passed through a period of rapid expansion, were approaching a crisis; and projects for the creation of a monopoly by means of the licensing of shops were in the air. Even the industries belonging to the third group were by no means free from monopolistic influences. Artificial silk and electrical engineering were dominated by powerful combines; there were cries for the rationalisation of motor manufacture; and it was plain that any decline in demand would give the signal for further attempts to build up restrictive monopolies at the consumers' expense.

There can be no going back to this inherently vicious system of capitalist restriction. The nation that attempts, in the twentieth century, to carry on by such methods will either suffer crushing defeat in war, or become the victim of domestic revolution. Yet it is plain that capitalism, left to itself, will practise restriction more and more, as the surest means of maintaining profits, in every industry in which demand is either contracting or expanding only at the average rate, and even in some in which the expansion is exceptionally rapid. It is much easier, under modern conditions, to make high profits by monopoly than by competition; and in one industry after another the size of the typical business unit becomes so large as to make monopolies easy to arrange.

Under these conditions, only two possibilities are left—a State-directed Capitalism under which the State makes itself responsible for the distribution of the nation's economic resources in accordance with its conception of national needs, but leaves the capitalists to own industry and profit by the exploitation of labour—or Socialism. Of these two methods, the first is the Fascist alternative, as practised in Germany and, very much less efficiently, in Italy. In both these countries, this form of State-controlled capitalism has been employed as an instrument of aggressive national policy, leading to war. The great question is whether it could be applied, not for war, but for peaceful development—for, if it could, the possibility remains open that capitalism may survive the war, and that Fascism rather than Socialism, may establish itself in Western Europe, whoever wins the war, as the dominant economic system.

This cannot happen unless, without the spur of war to drive it on, capitalism can be purged of its restrictive habits. But can it be so purged, except under that impulsion? War, and preparation for war, are the only insatiable consumers of capitalist products: for everything, almost, except war goods, the price has to fall in order to increase the

demand. Only an economy that treats need, instead of profit, as the criterion of worth-while production will go on, under twentieth-century conditions, passing out commodities up to the limit of productive capacity. It is, no doubt, possible to imagine a State, dominated by the idea of welfare, spurring on its capitalists to produce the maximum quantity of consumers' goods. But it is difficult to conceive what could be the political driving force behind such a State. If it were the people, why should they keep the capitalists to levy toll upon the product of industry? If it were any other class, why should that class take popular well-being as its objective?

It seems likely that the Fascist State can arrive, and maintain itself, in Great Britain only if this war ends in such a way as to begin a period not of peace but of preparation for further war. A patched-up peace, or rather truce, with Nazism would in all probability cause the extensions of State control which have been made to take on a Fascist character, and the invasions of our personal and political liberties to be maintained. If, on the other hand, we go through with the war to the end, and succeed in destroying the Nazi system in Europe, these very same extensions of State power, which would under other conditions serve as foundations for the Fascist State, can be used as the basis for a new Socialist order. The State control of industry can be transmuted into public ownership; the State control of finance can be used to bring about a better distribution of wealth; and the holocaust of obsolete institutions and practices can be treated as the opportunity for remaking society from its foundations. Rebuilding will be required on such a scale as to make it plain folly to set about restoring the property claims which war has reduced to a chaos.

The harder-won the victory, the likelier this outcome appears to be. It is true that the propertied interests are seizing every chance of consolidating their position with a view to the resumption of unfettered profit-making after the war. If the monopolies themselves become masters of the State during the war, if the popular controls and the machinery for checking and transferring power are undermined, then Democracy will be destroyed. The hold of the monopolies depends on their power over the State; and, if they lose that, they will only have been improving their property for the enjoyment of their heirs—the people. The question is one of power. The instruments of Socialism and Fascism are largely the same—for they are dictated by the modern conditions of production. The difference lies in the hands that wield these instruments.

A LONDON DIARY

THE bigger Blitz is certain and invasion is likely; they may use gas; carry your mask; stay put if the church bells ring; don't spread rumours; read our book of instructions; and much to the same effect. This is as it should be; Hitler will act with more speed and violence than anyone expects. The only remedy is to be ready for anything. So much for the public. But is the Government ready? That it is vigilant and determined I do not question. But there are a score of matters on which we need reassurance. Arrangements for adequate food storage and dispersal may now be reaching efficiency, but from all I hear transport is far from ready and dock clearance unsatisfactory. Many such questions have recently been raised in the House. I want to ask another. Has any policy been considered to prevent another "alien panic" such as occurred last summer? Mr. Morrison has done well on this subject and the Home Office was never keen on indiscriminate internment. Sir John Anderson was also handling the question of aliens in a liberal spirit a year ago. The worst trouble was lack of forethought which gave reaction its chance. Remember, too, that there are still chief constables and others in responsible positions who suffer from a vague notion that the alien as such is a dangerous character. It might be wise for Mr. Morrison to prepare to counteract these panicmongers. When warning us of the dangers of invasion he might do well to tell the public that full precautions have been taken to keep suspicious aliens out of the way, and that those who are free have satisfied the Government of loyalty and are to be relied upon in an emergency. He might remind the public of Mr. Peake's repeated statement in the House of Commons that the Home Office has no need to repent of considerate treatment of friendly aliens. I think it still holds good that not a single case has been reported of a "C" class alien having committed any serious offence which could be regarded as detrimental to the war effort of this country. If there are any aliens who are not interned and of whom the Government have reason to be suspicious, the time to make sure about them is now, and not when invasion actually begins. A Government statement on the position of friendly "enemy" aliens would serve a double purpose. It would help to prevent a recurrence of the mistakes of last year, and, scarcely less important, it would help to give practical proof that this is, indeed, a war against Fascism and not merely a national dog-fight.

* * *

There were two remarkable bits of information in Mr. Churchill's broadcast. Neither of them were new to "official circles," but no hint of them had been let out to the public. When I heard a few days ago that nearly a hundred German dive bombers had been destroyed in the recent attack on Malta, I asked in astonishment why this had not been broadcast to the world. The answer appears to be that Mr. Churchill wanted to keep that tit-bit for his world broadcast. I cannot say I blame him. The implications are highly important. Malta was supposed to be almost indefensible; it is obviously extremely strong. More significant, we have a complete demonstration that one of the weapons on which Germany has most specialised and which was so appallingly effective in Poland and France can be rendered useless by good anti-aircraft batteries. I hear that men who took part in that massacre say that shooting down dive bombers is rather like shooting grouse—when you know how to do it and can forget the victims of your skill are human. About the other piece of news, Mr. Churchill was excessively modest. It is a sober fact—I could scarcely believe it when it was told me—that at the most critical period last summer, when this country was denuded of arms after the collapse of France and the withdrawal of the British force from Dunkirk, Mr. Churchill and General Sir John Dill planned the campaign in the Middle East and actually began at that moment to send out the material, including tanks, which General Wavell has used with such astonishing success in his swoop through the desert. The historian will search with some excitement for a record of the considerations that decided this piece of audacity; was it that Mr. Churchill thought invasion improbable and risked it, or that he was so sure of the capacity of the Navy and Air Force to stop it that he thought tanks and armoured cars would not be wanted? To put Egypt before Britain was in any case extraordinary; but in war it is only the result that counts.

* * *

"How oddly things turn out!" said a friend of mine the other day. "I used to think of Lord Lloyd as the most dangerous fellow in the country and now I find myself regarding his death as a disaster." Not so odd really. Lord Lloyd was one of few men available whose energy and administration experience was equal to present demands. In this confused situation he was both valuable and dangerous. Experience with Lawrence in the last war and administrative posts since in the Far and Middle East made him an expert in fields where most of us are guessing. They also left him fanatically imperialist. He was one of the strongest supporters of the Prime Minister's unhappy policy in India. He was strongly pro-Arab, pro-Moslem and, most significant, pro-Mussolini. Or rather put it this way. He knew and admired Mussolini, and his natural authoritarianism warped his judgment of the strength of Italian Fascism and led him into the error of thinking that the Duce might be on Britain's side in the war which he foresaw with Germany. I remember wondering at his judgment when during the Spanish war he said in private that the Duce was the sort of rash fellow who might respond to our criticisms by starting the war against us. He had just been to see Mussolini and that, no doubt, affected his judgment. He showed the same set of prejudices when he wrote that deplorable little book about British war aims at the beginning of the war. He would have made England fight for Roman Catholicism and Latin-bloc Fascism. The religious side of Lloyd was obviously strong and genuine. His temper was dictatorial; Mr. Henderson was quite right to recall him from Egypt in 1929. And yet I believe that Lord Lloyd is at this moment a serious loss. He could look at facts. The first time I saw him he stood up stiff as a ram-rod at a Conservative convention and talked like a drill sergeant. During this war I have formed a different impression. He had learnt much and was one of the most intelligent and forward-looking Members of the Cabinet. If you had something to say about democratising the Services or about propaganda for a more equitable kind of world, Lord Lloyd was more inclined to listen and understand and, above all, to act effectively than some of his colleagues who professed more liberal sentiments. Which all boils down to saying that a man of character, who has energy, a clear head and administrative experience is often a better fellow to work with, even when you disagree fundamentally with him, than a sentimentalist who cannot get round to facing the situation and tumbles over himself in agreeing with your views, but has never thought out how to apply them.

General Wavell's Life of Lord Allenby is interesting reading just now. One sees how closely he has followed the experience of the last war in a desert campaign. And read this sentence (p. 223);

> Allenby weighed all those factors which prompted caution and delay against the wisdom of allowing his disorganised enemy no respite to recover nor time to organise a defence of the passes. With no hesitation he chose the bolder, but wiser course, and ordered an immediate advance.

* * *

I was discussing with Mr. Strachey the other day the effect of his excursion into ethics in his new book. He told me that he had recently used the same language about "love and truth" to an undergraduate audience. It was really, he said, much as if he had used obscene words in a drawing room. The audience were visibly embarrassed; he could see them turning pink under the collar. It is so long since anyone has dared to recall the values for which Socialism stands that they took some time to get over the feeling that he was indulging in indecency. The concentration on the economic basis of society and the materialistic conception of history, which embody truths that are as important and true as ever, has been so complete that the reason why anyone ever wanted a Socialist society has simply been forgotten. A strange split has occurred. Ethics have become divorced from politics; we have allowed the Church and the emotionalists to talk as if only they cared for the good, the true and the beautiful, and they have been content to leave the hard business of analysing society and interpreting events to Marxists who have been too easily content to let slip that moral basis without which there is no particular reason why they or anyone else should ever have wanted socialism. If Lord Halifax were to preface his remarks about fighting for Christianity with some home truths about the way in which his class has maintained its ruling position at the expense of everything else, he would shock many of his admirers: similarly, Mr. Strachey and THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION surprise people if they recall that the objection to the class society is that it is not founded on love, truth or beauty!

* * *

A Wall Street broker, I'm told, left the following Will:

> To my wife, I leave her lover, and the knowledge that I wasn't the fool she thought I was.
>
> * * *
>
> To my son, I leave the pleasure of earning a living—for 35 years, he thought the pleasure was mine. He was mistaken.
>
> * * *
>
> To my daughter, I leave £20,000—she will need it—the only piece of business her husband ever did, was to marry her.
>
> * * *
>
> To my valet, I leave the clothes he has been stealing from me for the last ten years—also the fur coat that he wore last winter at Palm Beach.
>
> * * *
>
> To my chauffeur, I leave my cars—he almost ruined them, and I want him to have the satisfaction of finishing the job.
>
> * * *
>
> And lastly, to my Partner, I leave the suggestion that he take some other man in with him if he expects to do any business.

* * *

A City gent is entitled to the credit for the suggestion that at this juncture Mussolini would be well advised to make over the Italian Empire to his wife's name. CRITIC

THIS ENGLAND

Our prize of 5/- for the contribution at the head of this column goes this week to Peggy Rankin.

All cuttings should be addressed to "This England," 10 Great Turnstile, W.C.1.

The mouth-watering displays of foodstuffs at Fortnum and Mason's this week made me wonder whether rations need worry anybody, when you can buy these lovely looking tins of stuff to help out with. If you're short of anything in the food line I'll be surprised if you can't get it there.—*Shopping News.*

The discussion was rounded off by Rotarian—with the reminder that, although there had been over 1900 years of Christendom, it was only during the last 100 years that there had really been applied Christian teaching.—*West Somerset Free Press.*

Replying to Mr. G. Strauss (Lambeth, N., Lab.), Mr. Duff Cooper said that men who spent their leisure time making public speeches against carrying on the war or who were notorious pacifists and therefore enemies of their country should not be given the privilege of addressing the public through the B.B.C., or even permitted the distinction of giving performances through the B.B.C. All members of the House were agreed that we should, in our foreign broadcasts, continually voice the desirability of the liberty and freedom for which we were fighting and that we should preserve throughout the principle of truth.—*Times.*

I said unthinkingly that it seemed to taste like any other brown bread. Then she told me it was a sample of the new Government whole-meal loaf.

On second thoughts I found I was favourably impressed. The bread has quality. It would go excellently with a glass of Fonseca 1920.—*Peterborough Daily Telegraph.*

BALKAN HOLIDAY

Tourists . . . have been pouring into Bulgaria in civilian dress in such numbers that German business houses have been ordered to evacuate their premises and accommodate them and the hotels are full.—*Daily Telegraph.*

Now playgrounds in Europe are just running short,
Bulgaria wins fame as a pleasure resort
Which Germans prefer for diversion and rest
To Greece to the south or Belgrade to the west.
No hints of invasion her valleys disturb,
The fishing is free and the shooting superb,
A corner untouched by Neuropa's war gloom,
Bulgaria's having a tourist boom.

The trip through Rumania is *sehr interessant*,
The mountains the visiting tourists enchant,
Ersatz is their suiting, their pockets are full,
They'll be soon passing onwards to "do" Istanbul,
The terms are inclusive of fresh caviare,
And *Hier spricht man deutsch* says Bulgaria's Tsar,
Sofia can hardly supply living room,
Bulgaria's having a tourist boom.

These tourists, when Norway was out of the news,
Went climbing all over her *wunderschön* views;
In Holland they made an artistic sojourn,
Though never (as tourists) again to return,
For wherever they go at the end of their stay
These visitors take the whole country away,
Yet the neutrals invite them, regardless of doom,
Bulgaria's having a tourist boom. SAGITTARIUS

THE CASE OF THE CHINESE SEAMEN

SOME thirty Chinese seamen are at this moment undergoing imprisonment in English gaols. As ships under British register, manned by Chinese sailors, reach British ports, groups of them are seized, taken before a magistrate and summarily convicted to terms of imprisonment amounting in some cases to as much as six months. At a time when every sailor manning a ship that reaches these shores has been working under conditions of the gravest peril, when we are rightly asked to applaud the courage of the men who are supplying us with food and munitions in spite of Nazi submarine and air attacks, these convictions of Chinese sailors are both surprising and disquieting. What is the explanation? Have these men refused to go to sea? Have they mutinied or committed some grave breach of discipline? Not at all. On the contrary, we believe that it is true to say that every man imprisoned has stated his readiness to continue braving the hardships of the seas. They are fully conscious—no race more so than the Chinese—that our country, like theirs, is involved in a war for freedom.

In every case these men have been convicted for the same reason. They are guilty, either individually or in "conspiracy," of a breach of contract because they refused to sail again without a war bonus of £5 per month. Five pounds a month is the bonus paid to British sailors; it is less than that received by the sailors of Holland and some other countries. Ever since the first month of the war the Chinese sailors have asked with the politeness of their race for a similar payment of £5. For sixteen months the Chinese Consulate in London has urged their case upon the attention of the Ministry of Shipping and the shipowners. The reason for refusing this demand of an equal bonus for an equal risk has never been clear. The Ministry of Shipping and the shipowners have pleaded, it is true, that the wages of Chinese seamen have been raised during the war and that this should serve instead of bonus, and it has been put about that the labour of Chinese sailors is not equal to that of white sailors. Neither of these arguments will bear enquiry. Officers on ships manned by Chinese state that man for man Chinese stokers are as good as their white shipmates. Secondly, it is true that the wages of the Chinese sailors have risen since the war began; so have the wages of other sailors. To-day, a British sailor receives about £10 a month for work for which a Chinese sailor is paid about £5. These arguments

are not genuine. It is hard to resist the conclusion that the real reason for refusing the Chinese sailor £5 as a reward for risking his life on our behalf is that the Chinese have always been treated like dirt in the past, and that it is difficult to persuade the authorities that China is now a nation fighting for the same cause as ourselves, with a new and conscious nationalism, and that her people are no longer willing to be treated as coolies have always been in the past.

That the authorities still assume that a Chinese does not count seems clear from the way in which these trials have been handled. In one case the magistrate at the Thames Police Court summarily ruled out of order all question of the bonus on which alone the men took their stand. They were all willing to serve, given the £5 bonus. Perhaps the magistrate was ignorant of this; perhaps he did not realise that the men had been patiently making this claim ever since the beginning of the war, and it was not until they despaired of justice unsupported by a demonstration of solidarity, that they had taken the drastic step of making the demand for £5 a condition for starting on another journey. On another occasion, ten men were actually imprisoned after a few minutes' hearing without legal representation of any kind at all. When an observer, present at the court on behalf of the Chinese Consulate, ventured, after sentence had been passed, to ask the magistrate what he should say to the Consulate about the question of legal representation for the appeal, the magistrate abruptly ordered him from the court. After this it is not surprising that the matter has moved from the realm of an industrial dispute into one of international politics, in which British canons of justice claimed are at stake and in which the happy relations now existing between this country and China are necessarily involved.

That matters should have been allowed to reach such a pass is to us almost incomprehensible. We have said little about this question during the last months, believing that it must necessarily be settled amicably and quickly, and we were confirmed in our view by the agreement some weeks ago to pay the £5 on the part of the Anglo-Saxon Company, which employs about 8,000 of the 20,000 Chinese sailors. A short time ago it seemed certain that the other shipping companies concerned would also come into line, and several of them have taken steps in that direction. In view of the immense importance of the work of the Chinese and other sailors, on whose good will this country's very existence depends, it would seem to us almost incredible that at this moment the Ministry of Shipping should apparently throw its weight against giving the sailors their obvious due, and should itself undertake these prosecutions which are a scandal to British justice, and which are certain to fail in their object, since their only effect has been to toughen the resistance of the sailors. We cannot believe that Mr. Churchill or other intelligent Members of the Cabinet, who understand the issues involved, can continue to be parties to this nonsense.

THE LUCK OF THE WEATHER

WHAT people will accept direct from the Almighty they will not accept from his Ministers here on earth. Many people, Socialists included, fail to realise this. Have they for instance, considered the fascinating if fearsome speculations opened up by the assumption that somehow or other the Government acquired control over the weather? Imagine that at the University match Cambridge having lost the toss opened play against a strong head wind. By half time they have held Oxford down to 13 points and they change over ready to pile up a handsome run of tries. At this juncture the wind veers round and blows furiously against Cambridge for the whole of the second half. The Minister of Meteorology is a Balliol man. The headlines in next morning's papers are obvious: "Cambridge students storm Office of Meteorology. Minister debagged." Or take the case of the Test matches. They would manifestly become impossible. Any foreigner who has lived here during the Tests must have been puzzled when, England having run up a score of nearly 500 on the first day of a good wicket, he has heard every Englishman of his acquaintance praying out loud for a sharp shower and a hot sun to bring the Australians in on a sticky wicket. When the significance of a sticky wicket is explained to him he probably expresses his amazement that such sportsmen as the English should wish the odds to be so flagrantly twisted against their opponents. Is this the spirit of this mysterious game? What then is the significance of that supposedly pregnant saying: "It isn't cricket"? If he goes on to suggest that, since a sticky wicket is presumably guaranteed to wreak great havoc, it would be a good idea to water the pitch surreptitiously overnight, his discomfiture is completed by the information that although the English ordinarily eschew mob violence the perpetrator of such an outrage if detected would indubitably be lynched. Cricket, in a word, is the rules plus the luck of the weather. If the Government were responsible for weather Test Matches simply could not take place. The inevitable result of any play would be the secession of Australia from the Empire. What could the wretched Government do? However impartial it tried to be it would be suspect of sins either of commission or omission. It would be accused of subtly rigging the atmosphere so that the wicket crumbled before its time. Fervent partisans egged on by statistical experts would argue that by all the records and averages Tuesday afternoon should produce a spell of bad light not sufficient to stop play, but bad enough to yield two cheap wickets after tea. Wartime ferocity would be nothing in comparison with the feelings aroused.

Charley was the husband of the landlady of one of my diggings, and Charley was a fitter at the time when engineering was going through a bad patch. There may be some word in Russian to express Charley's class-consciousness: English is inadequate. It rose to fever heat in Ascot week when Charley's morning prayer was "May it rain on the b——s!" He infected the whole yard with this fervour and his mates hammered metal to this invocation. If, as usually happened, it was fine at Ascot and rained on the proletarian August Bank Holiday Charley became a blaspheming atheist. It would never have done to make Charley Minister of Meteorology in a Left Government with control over the weather. He would literally have soaked the rich. The Gold Cup would have been run in a typhoon. I doubt in fact if there would have been any more racing after the first day's cloudburst.

What flagrant injustices are perpetrated by our uncontrollable weather! The poor kids' Sunday School treat is washed out by a downpour, and the hardworking farmer is ruined by a frost or a drought or even by exceptionally good weather. Some economists still suspect that our booms and depressions are ultimately traceable to weather fluctuations. Two bumper crops in succession, against all precedent, broke the Brazilian coffee pool and bankrupted the country. One could even argue that with different weather in one or two countries in 1930 the trade cycle might have been twisted, and the world might have escaped the devastating secondary deflation of 1931. With an upward turn of the cycle in that year there would have been no Hitler and no war. What a crime to fasten on the weather!

And yet, as Mark Twain once plaintively remarked, nothing is done about it. Mankind accepts these buffetings of Providence and no civilised people has put up the barricades as a sequel to a devastating hailstorm. Primitive people are more irrational, or perhaps one should say more rational. On such occasions they take it out of their gods and burn their images or otherwise treat them with contumely. But with us when a prolonged cold spell in May brings ruin to fruit-growers, a bad start to the Stop-me-and-buy-one boys, but extra revenue to the coal industry one group breathes a Lord-be-praised and the other a Lord's-will-be-done. Or if piety does not come in one lot accepts its good luck, the other curses its fate, but both call it a season and let it go at that.

It might be imagined that a Government in control of the weather could do some things manifestly of great advantage to the community as a whole and without prejudice to any single person or interest. In this country, for example, it would never permit a frost in late May, and the fruit crop would be immune from such a disaster. Who could possibly object to that? But there are parts of these islands, possibly in the Scillies, Cornwall or Devon, which are already immune from May frosts or at any rate less subject to them than are other parts of the country. Land in such areas must have an added value precisely for that reason and this differential would be wiped out if the cause of it were removed. The owners would have a plausible claim for compensation and they would feel justified in pressing it because the change was obviously man-made and not of divine origin. At first blush we would all agree that a democratic humanitarian government should invariably bestow fine weather on Bank Holidays since the populace deserves this boon for its rare outings. The government which washed out Whit Monday would deservedly have to run for its life. But cinema proprietors could argue that the values of their businesses have been based on the assumption that among other things occasional wet Bank Holidays fill their theatres to the roof, and that they are entitled to rely upon that factor as a determinant in their revenues. The arbitrary change in the data would confer an uncovenanted benefit at their expense on the owners of outdoor entertainments, a deserving class but no more deserving than themselves. They would be prepared to accept the change but only if due compensation were granted. Similarly the plumbing industry could only be expected to forgo its annual quota of burst

pipes and cisterns, and its bonanza Great Frost once in a generation, if their losses were capitalised into a grant.

The point of all this is that Governments nowadays do interfere with the economic weather and that this intervention raises profound problems of the type described above. The beautiful simplicity of nineteenth-century economic philosophy lay precisely in this, that the forces playing on the system were regarded as anonymous forces coming from outside. Along with the weather, new inventions, changes in taste and fashion, all the vagaries of consumer demand, indeed the whole welter of influences affecting demand and supply were regarded as external data operating as it were out of the blue. People were expected to accept this ever-changing play of outside forces, and success lay precisely in the skill and speed of adjustment. Luck it was realised also played a part, but it was the luck of the game. Suppose women change their minds about lipstick and powder, and decide to present shining faces to the world. The cosmetic trade will slump and some embittered losers will curse the fickle jades. The smart ones will think out new nostrums for endowing women with clear natural complexions, and the unenterprising will stagnate in a distressed industry. The trade is fairly open to these risks. But suppose a damfool imitation dictator in Whitehall puts a ban on lipstick and powder. The onus is no longer on the Almighty for having created a fickle sex. The cosmetic industry will now have a target here on earth and it will pray, if not actively work, for the removal of its enemy. And here the awful thought occurs that perhaps this is the secret of dictatorship; that its decrees are regarded as divine; that it can deal out economic fortune and misfortune arbitrarily and that its rulings are accepted passively like changes in the physical weather. However, we have not got to that stage in democratic countries and people who will submit to the buffetings of fate will take up a very different attitude when fate is discovered to be working through terrestrial lobbies. The British Government made a trade treaty with the Scandinavian countries which provided for increased takings of coal from the North-Eastern area in return for reciprocal concessions. The German and Polish coal thus driven out of the Scandinavian markets sought an outlet in the Mediterranean countries where it ousted Welsh coal. The Welsh are a pious race, but the chapels could not persuade the miners that this was a simple case of "the Lord giveth the Lord taketh away" process. In any case more realistic aspects would be discussed at lodge meetings of the unions. The solution of the economic text books would be a migration of Welsh miners to the N.E. area, and some economists if pressed might agree that in the circumstances it was up to the government to pay their fares. But, in fact, the repercussions do not stop there. Some old lady living perhaps in Bournemouth will economise on a gardener because her dividend warrants from Cardiff show an unwelcome decline, and the son of the soil having attended a few W.E.A. classes may have learned to trace cause and effect.

> The rich man in his castle
> The poor man at his gate
> God made them high or lowly. . . .
> *That stuff is out of date.*

As the working man or his leaders become more sophisticated they will discover that the line back from their fluctuating fortunes does not lead on High but goes through St. Stephens to some office in Queen Victoria Street, and that the footprints reveal not a true goddess but a heavy mundane figure in spat-covered boots. Was it the free play of the great anonymous uncontrollable forces operating on demand and supply which closed the shipyards at Jarrow and prevented the erection of a new steel works there? Why you could make a whole rogues' gallery from the photographs of the responsible gentry.

The application of the weather simile to war economics provokes some ironical reflections. It is plausible to think and talk of the war as a tornado which overwhelms all alike. We are all open to the lightnings, all overtaken by the flood, all in the heart of the storm (see any Ministerial speech *passim*). But wars in the past, and with our present muddled policy this one is proving no exception, have buried some people six feet deep in mud and floated others on a serene tide of prosperity. The contemporary laments of Company chairmen concerning the Excess Profits Tax provide a beautiful illustration. All that these modest people demand is that their businesses should be enabled to cover their prime costs, to provide generous depreciation allowances, to set aside ample reserves for the post-war struggle and to earn a "normal" profit plus something extra for incentive. That's all! Costs including ample depreciation, a sufficient margin for reserves, and profits over the normal.! Just the equivalent of a bumper crop raised in the glorious sunshine of peace. And if they get this, when it is all over they will congratulate the shareholders on having "weathered the storm." PARAJ

ON A DAY

IT is pleasant to wake up in the morning and hear some one removing the wooden frame that all night long has been assisting the black-out at the expense of fresh air. It is pleasant to have one's breakfast tray brought to the bedside with, perhaps, an egg on it. It is only recently that I have begun to realise that there is more to be said for eggs than I used to think between the years 1918 and 1939. That long interval of peace, during which I could cheerfully refuse morning after morning eggs and bacon, boiled eggs, scrambled eggs, poached eggs, and indeed eggs in any form, now looks to me, as I glance backwards, as a vista of wasted opportunities. I must have eaten thousands of eggs during my life; yet for years I have been despising them as commonplaces of food thrust upon human beings at a time of day at which no human being has a right to be hungry. Now I know better. Now I know that if I were given my choice between an egg or ambrosia for breakfast, I should choose an egg. Job, or some one in *The Book of Job*, raised the question some thousands of years ago; "Is there any taste in the white of an egg?" I know the answer—it is in the affirmative—definitely in the affirmative, as we say nowadays. The white of an egg is delicious, and so is the yolk—soft-boiled, hard-boiled, or medium-boiled. It lacks the slightly sickly flavour of honeydew and the over-rich gust of the milk of Paradise. To think that at one time such delicacies could be bought for sixpence a dozen! As I look back, I seem to myself to have been spending my days in a Yukon of the palate, living like a pauper, ignorantly indifferent to the gold that lay all around me.

Having eaten my egg, I have then to decide whether to rise or to stay in bed and read the papers. The decision is not difficult. I stay in bed and read the papers. The fresh morning is blowing in through the open window: I have finished the week's work; there seems to be no reason why I should spoil the prologue of a good day by descending into the turmoil of those who are of necessity busier than I. I study the map of northern Africa, trying to make out the position of all sorts of towns of which I had never heard till a few weeks ago. Then, in the midst of my geography lesson, I hear it announced from downstairs that there is a hawfinch in the garden. A hawfinch happens to have for me the attraction of a rare bird. Authorities on birds declare that it is common, and one of them even boasts that he has seen sixty or seventy of them feeding together in old thorns in February. I, however, have never seen more than one of them at a time, and that rarely and only for an instant. Hence the hawfinch is to me a bird in the golden oriole class—a bird well worth putting on a dressing-gown and hurrying downstairs to see. He has a bad reputation, it is true; he is the arch-looter of those garden peas which almost rival eggs in the deliciousness of their flavour. Still, being rare—so far as I am concerned—he is a wonder. I survey him through the window as he feeds on the lawn, and am mildly disappointed in the size of the "huge" and "massive" bill of which the ornithologists speak. If he were as common as the chaffinch, I tell myself I should think little of him. But he is not so common as the chaffinch: that is the secret of his charm. That is why I should be glad to see him in a garden of peas, as I should be glad to see a bullfinch in an apple orchard. That, at least, will be my mood until the peas ripen.

Having begun the day so auspiciously, and having shaved and bathed—luxurious activities, both of them—I set out for my ration of exercise—a walk to The Green Man. No morning is so beautiful that it does not seem a little more beautiful as one approaches the low roof of The Green Man. A man inside tells me the larks have been singing over the common during the morning. The landlord asks me whether I heard the troops passing during the night. "Thousands of 'em," he says. "It was a mock invasion. Manoeuvres. It was a great success, they say: only one German landed. I'll bet you there was no nonsense about it. Did you hear about the Home Guard at A——? Two of them were going on duty for the night when the Scots Guards who are stationed there challenged them. These chaps answered in a jocular kind of way and tried to put over some funny stuff. But the Scots Guards weren't having any. They arrested them, chucked them into a lorry, locked 'em in, and kept them there till morning. And quite right, too," he adds, as he dries a tumbler. Then a smile of pure joy overspreads his countenance as he thinks of the plight of the Home Guards locked into a lorry for levity through a long and freezing night.

Some soldiers come in and the talk somehow turns on food. A civilian asks a sergeant whether they have a good cook. "There's the cook over there," says the sergeant pointing to another soldier. "Couldn't you have told that he was a cook? Didn't you know that you can always tell a cook by his big ears?" The civilian looks as

if he had not heard correctly. "All cooks have big ears," says the sergeant. As a matter of fact, the size of the cook's ears is normal; but how could the human intellect work without generalisations?

When the soldiers have left, a little red cheeked man comes in—a man who must have had the kindliest, most good-natured face from his childhood and who looks kindlier and more good-natured the older he grows. He is crippled with rheumatism but no acidity has entered into his spirit. I have heard of the death of the brother with whom he lived, and have watched the coffin passing on its way to the churchyard, the old man limping beside the vicar and falling further and further behind the hand-pushed hearse. I express my sympathy and he says: "Yes," and subsides into silence, as he takes a chair and fills his pipe slowly. After a minute he looks at me and says to me in a voice as gentle as a whisper: "I shall miss my brother. And I'll tell you for why. He used to lace my boots. Ever since I got this arthritis," he goes on, "I haven't been able to reach my right foot." He stretches his arms down towards the foot to demonstrate how impossible this is, and his hands scarcely reach lower than his knee. "I've thought of all kinds of ways of lacing the boot for myself," he tells me, "but they're no good. I've tried this"—and he gets down on his knee on the floor, and shows me how he can nearly manipulate a boot by reaching at it from behind. "And I've tried this"—and he gets up and puts his right knee on a chair, and once more makes it clear that, though he can reach the boot from behind, he cannot reach far enough to lace it.

All the time he speaks, he wears the same friendly and uncomplaining smile. He tells how he has thought of other kinds of boots, but that elastic-sided boots are too light for the work of digging, and that Wellington boots, though perhaps easy to get on, might be difficult to get off. "I don't know what I shall be able to do," he says. "The neighbours have been looking after me since my brother died."

I ask him how with such arthritis he manages to ride a bicycle, for he is always seen either riding a bicycle or pushing one along on the road. "Ah," he says, "it's not so bad on the bicycle. It eases the hip, I think. The trouble is getting started. If I can get on to the bicycle from a bank on the road side, and the road's downhill, I can roll home as easy as anything. But, if the start's uphill, I'm never sure of being able to pedal, and I often have to get down and walk." I ask him whether it isn't hard work for him to push a bicycle along the road. "Ah, no," he says, "it makes it easier. You see you lean on it."

I leave him to go to his bicycle where it is leaning against the iron railings. Another countryman is walking along the road, and soon we are talking about the coming season's seeds and vegetable gardens. He has a contempt for the Iceberg lettuce and the cabbage variety and says that in his opinion the only cabbage lettuce worth growing is Continuity. He expresses his hatred of horse-radish as a plant in the garden, "though," he adds, "people do say that it's good for rheumatism." We are just at the beginning of a discussion on the potatoes best suited to the local soil, when the little man with arthritis sails past us on his bicycle, the image of a happy man in a happy world. As he passes, he turns his head, waves a hand, and calls out: "Beautiful day!" Looking after him, my neighbour says: "Everybody's fond of Johnny. Poor chap, his brother will be a great loss to him."

My niece meets me at the door and tells me that the hawfinch has been in the garden again. "Good!" I reply. Y. Y.

THE PINK DECADE

IN *New Writing in Europe* (Penguin sixpenny) Mr. Lehmann has produced the first study of the 'thirties, intended as a preliminary introduction. It is a brief and controversial little volume, especially interesting as it presents the views of the editor of *New Writing* with extraordinary clarity. He sees the literature of the period as a social and international effort, which found in direct reporting a stimulus lacking in the literary tradition. While he gives interesting criticisms of individual writers, he seems to me to accept too much at its own valuation the period as a whole. I think that most writers who began their careers in the 'thirties are like me in looking back on that decade with a sense not of triumph, but of shame and failure. We accomplished something, but how little it was compared to what was necessary, or compared to what we could have done if we had been wiser, braver, more provident and energetic!

The measure of our difference from preceding writers is that I can write "we." There was never a decade in which so large a body of dissident writers felt enough unity to refer to themselves in the first person plural. We believed in the necessity for social revolution, in the common humanity of the artist and the identity of his ultimate good with that of the working class. We differed considerably about means, but our social analysis had enough in common for us to be able to argue.

We achieved a number of minor successes—so far I agree with Mr. Lehmann. We broke down much of the writer's isolation. We reinstated the speech and matter of everyday life as legitimate tools and material for art. We renewed the writer's claim to active citizenship. We showed ourselves more sensitive to the events of Europe than any other professional body. We rediscovered our affinity to the journalist and mixed more freely than our predecessors with people of every class. Our social consciousness provided some of the impetus for widening popular journalism and publishing. Yet as a group of writers, we shall probably be judged by posterity as moral, political and artistic failures, each aspect of that failure being implicit in the whole.

We proclaimed that the society of which for the most part we were privileged members was vicious, corrupt, unjust and doomed by internal contradictions to collapse or contract to a Fascist corporation under which the weakly liberties we enjoyed would be suspended. Our poems, plays, novels and articles denounced that society. Yet we continued to enjoy our privileged positions. An occasional appearance at a public meeting was all that distinguished the lives of most of us from those of our immediate predecessors. Some fought in Spain, and to them all honour; but the rest were spectators. Our intellects demanded the abandonment of the class we denounced. If the situation was as urgent and tragic as we stated—and it was more so—the sacrifice of leisure, privilege and even life was necessary. But we drew back, pleading that artistic integrity demanded aloofness. Though that argument may have seemed to us sincere, it cloaked our moral and political evasion.

The impetus of our writing came from reaction to family and class situations. The certainty of what was wrong with the middle class was stronger than its corollary, the need to join with the working class. The autobiographical section of George Orwell's *Road to Wigan Pier* typifies the emotional confusion of Left-wing intellectuals of the middle class. The *evitanda* were defined more clearly than the *optanda*.

Discount the protestations of fidelity to the working class, the hectoring analyses of bourgeois decadence, and examine the position of the middle-class "revolutionary" of the 'thirties. The solid core of his public was not the working class, but dissident members of the middle class, like himself. His books, published at lending library prices, depended on two Sunday papers of reactionary views for their success. Only when the Left Book Club was started, as a means of bringing cheap books to a progressive public, did the stranglehold of the Sunday papers and circulating libraries weaken. The financial success of writers, however, still depended on the controllers of middle-class opinion, and literary reputations were made and broken by that class. The only way open to the young writers if they wished to reach the masses lay in devising a scheme for publishing their works originally at a shilling or perhaps sixpence. (The publication of Penguins had small influence on writing, since almost without exception the works published were reprints of 7*s*. 6*d*. novels.)

To cut away from the 7*s*. 6*d*. market demanded a courage which the writers of the 'thirties did not possess. It meant at least a temporary reduction of income; and it implied a belief that what we had to write was important to people not in thousands, but in hundreds of thousands. Most of us did not have that belief (and I think we were quite right, but it made havoc of our protestations of wanting to reach the masses). At that period, we were not prepared to sacrifice the temporary assurance of a small income to our avowed aims.

The refusal to work in close co-operation with any political party was due to the same evasion. We were like those neurotics who cannot cross a road; one step from the security of the pavement into the road and we retreated. 'And on the pavement, we argued, was the material of our art. All that we knew was the middle-class society which we denounced; and we couldn't leave it, any more than the scarabaeus can leave its ball of ordure.

So in the fear of losing the old material of our art, we never acquired new material. The pattern of the growth of Fascism, which obsessed the work of the 'thirties, was an intellectual formula, evolved by schoolmasters who knew no Fascists or Communists, no armament manufacturers or international gunmen.

The training these writers needed was not teaching the children of

the rich in prep-schools, but acting as foreign correspondents in half a dozen capitals in Europe and America. Unfortunately, there was no newspaper magnate so beneficent as to give them jobs of this sort; and when Auden and Isherwood were commissioned to report the Chinese war, they produced a book that Nero would have enjoyed reading while Rome burnt.

The artists of the 'thirties who will interest posterity are the men of action, Malraux, Bates, Silone. Those who held back, "for their art's sake," will find their sterility exposed the more familiar their technical virtuosity becomes. Their contribution, as Mrs. Woolf has pointed out, lies chiefly in their autobiographical work; the sensitive revelation of their experience. Their "political" writing is bad, not because it is political, but because it was never lived.

A. CALDER-MARSHALL

SOME COMMENTS ON SIBELIUS

CRITICS have for years been puzzled and dismayed by the presence, in the work of Sibelius, of two apparently inconsistent personalities. Some solved the problem by saying that he was a Jekyll who used his Hyde quite cynically to please the masses, while others preferred to believe that he was simply Hyde *tout court*, for they could not see how a maker of characteristic pieces of superficial interest could be capable of writing symphonies as good as his seemed to be. Complete artistic schizophrenia is indeed only hypothetically possible, and in Sibelius the two categories do overlap extensively; yet their existence calls attention to the puzzling nature of this composer's personality, as mysterious and as successfully hidden as that of Brahms. To say that a man's nature is enigmatic is usually equivalent to a complaint that his attitude to human relationships is unclear, that "one never knows where one is with So-and-so." Confronted simultaneously with the Fourth Symphony and some feckless, beribboned little piano piece, the critic's first impulse is to suspect some kind of humbug. This explanation has had to be discarded in favour of a mystery; yet I think a true exegesis is possible, and I will attempt one.

All great creative artists have a certain simplicity—the kind of quality which Walter Pater called *diaphaneity*. The effect of this in its possessor is a constant freshness of vision. More ordinary people, whose emotional reactions are read out, so to speak, from a slate which is continually being written over but never washed clean, are apt to be offended by this simplicity and to think it something else—a form of double-crossing which takes an unfair advantage of the stuff of sensuous experience and at the same time constitutes a criticism of the established rules of seeing, hearing and feeling. But even the artist's vision is only of this perspicuous order when turned on to those aspects of experience to which his sensibility is peculiarly attuned; when turned elsewhere it may yield the most conventional of views, the more so by reason of the oracular concentration it is in the habit of exercising in its own sphere. Shakespeare and Goethe and Leonardo are the exceptions which prove the rule that one should never expect artists to be universal. It is possible, if you are very clever indeed, to deceive a good many people on this point (Jean Cocteau has done it for years); but men like Sibelius disdain such plots, for to cozen other people successfully you must deceive yourself most of the time. Sibelius's music at its best has an icy, inhuman beauty which it shares with that of only one other composer—Busoni; but whereas in the latter the quality arises from the predominance of intellect over feeling, in Sibelius it is the expression of a poetic apprehension of non-human forces. I will return to this point later; for the present the emphasis is on the other—the human or social—side. For what, from the tone-poems and suites that do not deal with Nature alone, do we learn about human beings from Sibelius? Only those qualities which are invariably attributed to the superhuman figures of mythologies: only the heroic qualities—those which have the ruthless obduracy of natural forces—are included in the perspicuous segment of the composer's vision. I am afraid it may seem impertinent to speak thus of a living man, but it seems to me probable that, like Beethoven's, Sibelius' response to social life and his own surroundings is a conventional and even uninteresting one, and that this side of his personality is represented by the piano pieces and above all by songs like "The Kiss" and "The Tryst," as well as by more pretentious works such as the *Valse Triste* and *Finlandia*, all of which display "stock" responses to given ideas and emotions. That the composer should be aware or not of the distinction within him is not pertinent: there is no evidence that Sibelius subscribes to the "priestly" view of art, and a good deal that he considers it his duty to Finland to provide her with music for all occasions; and the result just is what it is. This explanation accounts, I think, for the fallacy under which some critics still labour, that Sibelius is merely an inflated kind of Grieg, dressed up on occasion in the Wanderer's hat and cloak. Now Grieg had a lyrical talent of no mean order, but I should have thought any critical tyro could have seen how limited his capabilities as a harmonist, orchestrator and symphonist were when confronted with those of Sibelius. A comparison of the Piano Concerto of Grieg with the Violin Concerto of Sibelius will alone serve to illustrate this point. Grieg's vision was true, tender, and sometimes even dramatic; but it was concentrated on the human elements which composed his world: it was a *domestic* vision. Neither he nor Sibelius attempt to interpret the contemporary soul on the scale of an Ibsen: the one could not have done so, the other has not cared to try. But works like *Tapiola* and the Fourth Symphony have a tragic profundity of an order which touches the Peer Gynt Suite at no point.

The music of Sibelius springs from origins that are widely separated: Beethoven and Tchaikovsky. Later on the modal influence of sixteenth-century religious music seems to have played its part by expelling the Tchaikovskian juice in favour of a more saturated and astringent fluid. Its effect can be studied more directly in the severe yet felt intensity of the second section of the Seventh Symphony and in the final coda of the Sixth. Tchaikovsky clearly presides over the first two symphonies (especially the Finales), less clearly over the tone-poems; yet Sibelius's method of "describing" in sound is the final result of the Russian, rather than of the German, school. The tone-poems of Tchaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakoff and Liadoff represent a parallel development to the Wagner-Strauss heritage, with its melodramatic emphasis on the personal; they issue, by diverging paths, in Sibelius and Debussy. No way leads between *La Mer* and *The Oceanides*, but from one peak you can see the other. While the visions which created those two masterpieces are fascinatingly dissimilar, their composers are equal in intensity and originality, and alike in the impersonal quality of their music. But they differ in both means and end. The object of all the subtle decoration in Debussy's tone-poems is to transmit various kinaesthetic sensations. In Sibelius's later orchestral works decoration disappears altogether: in the *Nightride and Sunrise*, in *Tapiola*, in all the symphonies after the Second, there is no ornament whatsoever: the musical thought fills out the entire score, from flutes to double basses. In this continuous polyphony Sibelius raises to the status of themes phrases which would have been used as mere accompaniment-figures by composers less profoundly attentive to the potential significance of the simplest succession of notes. It is probably for the same reason that Sibelius never finds it necessary to "vary" his themes, for variation inevitably entails ornament. Instead, each phrase is turned and twisted and combined with others so as to wring the last drop of meaning from it. Even in his most directly descriptive music, Sibelius eschews decoration. Compare the dawn in the *Nightride* with that in Ravel's exquisite *Daphnis et Chloe;* the first is as severely accurate as the background of an Italian primitive, the second as lusciously impressionistic as a Bonnard or an Othon Friesz. The "Concert of Winds" from the *Tempest* music is completely innocent of anything like the elaborate onomatopoeia of Debussy's *Dialogue du Vent et de la Mer*. The *Jeux de Vagues*, again, makes us feel the breaker hitting our chests and hear the tumble of the pebbles as the wave goes back; in *The Oceanides* we *see* the breaker crash and beyond it the long, sad, empty horizon and the enormous wind-broken sky. It is here, I think, that we touch the central point of Sibelius's art as a tone-poet: his descriptive music moves us by leading straight from the ear to the eye, rather than to the mind or to tactual and olfactory sensations. The "Concert of Winds" is so eerily impressive because the shapes of the musical phrases "draw" for us the arabesques described by the movements of air; Sibelius makes us feel the shape of the invisible. Indeed he is perhaps the greatest modern creator of visual effects in music, such for example as his frequent habit of overlapping one complex of sound by a harmonically distant one (*pp crescendo*), then lifting the first and leaving the second exposed, which is in turn overlapped by a third, and so on—a procedure which conveys exactly the displacement of differently coloured shafts of light by one another over a motionless background.

Analogies from one art to another are admittedly hazardous, but if not taken too literally they may be useful in suggesting the climate in which an artist's imagination lives, as well as the particular dimension in which it loves best to move. In any case the evocative method I have been attempting to describe is not confined to music; Milton and Dante were masters of this kind of double suggestion, whereby the movement of the verse, the length of syllables and devices of alliteration are used to convey not merely the sense to the

mind, but an actual movement of some kind—building of a bridge, fall through the air, ascent into gathering light—to the reader's nerves and muscles.

In a simpler and perhaps deeper sense Sibelius would appear to share with Wordsworth that peculiar blend of a poetic apprehension of non-human forces with a conventional and rather dour outlook on the lives of men, which I have already mentioned. The mournful, solitary fear that draws its steady graph through *Tapiola* is of exactly the same kind as Wordsworth expressed in that passage of *The Prelude* which describes the boy's moment of terror at the sudden sight of the dark mountain lowering above him. For both these poets Nature has a personality more real and menacing than any man. But the terror and love she inspires proceeds from the unpredictableness of her dual nature; for a long time she remains dormant, then, at some indifferent node of events, she springs into life, as the sudden spurt of a match behind a blank pane of glass reveals a motionless pair of staring eyes. Look into the depths of a coal fire, or into the gnarled bole of a dying oak; for long it is but a flickering redness you see, or the ancient wrinkles of weather-beaten bark. Then, without warning, a threatening face glares at you from the fire, or the head of a dryad from the tree. Such is the origin of the gods men worship. . . . Such, too, are the visions that Wordsworth devoted his life to describing; that Beddoes had when he wrote:

"As the air shuts behind a robin's wings."

such the prestigia that lurk in the depths of Graham Sutherland's wonderful romantic landscapes.

Sibelius has stated that his procedure, when planning a tone-poem, is quite different from what it is when a symphony is in question. Maybe; but this admission only describes the process of which the composer is conscious in manipulating his material; it tells us nothing of the far more important *un*conscious source of the material itself. And the fact is, I think, that with this composer it is impossible to say where "tone-painting" stops and "pure" music begins. Perhaps the distinction is always a more or less false one; in the case of Sibelius I think there is no doubt that it is. In proof of this I should point to the evident fact that his career as a symphonist shows a swift liberation from the bondage of sonata-form and finally even an application of the structural scheme of his tone-poems to that of the last two symphonies (that the Sixth is actually divided into four not very distinct movements does not affect the point). Not being a Teuton, Sibelius possibly found that liberation easy to achieve. His period of study in Berlin and Vienna can hardly have failed to rub in the lesson of composers like Bruckner, who insist on cramming their ideas, willy-nilly, into the strait jacket of classical symphonic form, regardless of the fact that it cannot give them the kind of scope they need. It can scarcely be chance that years of devotion to symphonic writing should, in composers of powerful and enterprising imagination, issue in a gradual loosening of the traditional form into something much more like a fantasia, the form of which is dictated by the nature of the material. Even in the case of Beethoven, the Ninth Symphony is a good deal freer in form than the first, simply because there is so much more in it to be expressed; while a comparison of Sibelius's Seventh with Mahler's Ninth will throw further light on the subject. To that same liberation we owe the extreme succinctness and compression observable in the Third, Fourth, Sixth and Seventh symphonies; the disdain of all romantic effects—huge climaxes, gathering-of-the-clans, solemn Wagnerian transitions making a "literary" use of the themes, and all the Straussian perversions of instrumental tone in the interests of amazement, and finally the astonishing abruptness with which the movements end, abjuring an effective exit with the simplest of cadences, the moment all has been said.

The art of Sibelius is necessarily an elegiac one; his is the music of a man who has felt deeply the truth that to understand the mystery of Nature is to submit to it and to expect no mercy in a quarter where human emotions have no currency. A misapprehension of this mystery through pride results in a cosy, anthropomorphic view of Nature, such as Wagner displays in *The Ring* and the *Karfreitagszauber*. A truer consciousness may be heard at work in the first movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. Such visions are frightening; what sensitive musician has not felt a shiver at some of the more awful moments of *Tapiola*, at the spectral threat of frost in the slow movement of the Second Symphony, at the dying sunlight in the coda of the Sixth, at the terribly smooth approach of the *Swan of Tuonela?* To have seen such sights and to have expressed them with so absolute an adequacy requires the humility of true greatness.

EDWARD SACKVILLE WEST

A SEPARATION

Yes. The will decided. But how can the heart decide
Lying deep under the surface
Of the level reasons the eye sees—
How can the heart decide
To banish this loved face for ever?

The starry eyes on the fringe of darkness
To forego? The light within the body's blindness?
To prove that these were lost in any case
And accept the stumbling stumps of consolations,

When under sleep, under the day,
Under the world, under the bones,
The unturning changeless heart,
Burning in suns and snows of passion,
Makes its mad protestations
And breaks with vows and declarations?

STEPHEN SPENDER

THE MOVIES

"Dulcy," at the Empire
"Public Deb. No. 1," at the Dominion

Strange are the devices of cut-throat competition. When the shopper sees a new Woolworth and a new Littlewood rising a few doors from one another, he or she might suppose a deadly opposition. But that, it seems, is by no means the case. In one sense, they are running neck to neck; in another, they are there for mutual help, to shuttle a customer to and fro, to increase a demand. So it is, too, with cinemas, which herd into areas, and with the films they show. One week the film-fan will open his paper at the amusement column to find that biographies of inventors are all the rage; the next week it may be sagas of the plains or all-singing melodrama. These changes of atmosphere one must accept like the weather, prepared to button up or burst into flannels at a moment's notice. The movie weather has been thawing lately. A spell of insight into Nazi aims has been followed by squalls of comedy. I thought I noticed it last week, with the fluttering ribbons of *Quiet Wedding*, and now it is balmy weather all round. Besides the comics listed above there is *Old Bill and Son* for those who can face the jokes of the last war carried forward into this one; and at the Empire, the Marx Brothers have been "trailed" for some future date, which, no doubt, will bring the season to a smacking close.

Of this new bunch, *Dulcy* is much the dottiest and funniest. An aeroplane slides into a lake before its driver remembers that it ought to have been a seaplane. A surrealist typing out a play in a canoe is run down by a speed-boat and when the canoe rights itself he is still tapping. One genuine lunatic in a country house spreads infection so that people in other rooms chase bats with tennis rackets or go on picnics where huge steaks are snatched off their plates by giant mastiffs. Everyone gets a touch of persecution mania, wives accuse husbands, and a motor magnate is even driven to buying a new motor off an inventor. The hostess, and unwitting cause of intrigue, is sexy Miss Sothern; she carries her screw-loose deliciously. "Meet me at the boat, 47 quay," says her lover. "I'll remember that," says Miss Sothern, "47 is my lucky number." When the time comes 47 has become 74, but by an accident that turns out to be the right quay, and she arrives saying, "I've a lot of lucky numbers," with a little Chinese boy, hurriedly adopted, in tow. I prefer this daft innocence to the other Ann Sothern role, the Gold-Rush Maisie with longings after Mae West. In *Dulcy* she is irresistibly funny, and Roland Young as a business-man on the edge of a breakdown and Reginald Gardner as a full-fledged looney, keep her company.

Public Deb. No. 1 makes the mistake of trying to achieve satire. A soup king's daughter (Brenda Joyce) gets Communism, and the early scenes, when she tries to go to prison and haunts a Russian restaurant where they sing "O Tchichanya," has some good hits. Communism with a Daimler, as one of the newspaper-men in the film points out, isn't so bad. But *Public Deb. No.* 1 gets itself involved in "serious" argument, and somehow Miss Elsa Maxwell—with her social prestige very much underlined—steps in as champion of capitalist ideals. She gives one of her parties to ram home the case against the Reds; but if all her parties are as dull as this one, Communism would seem to win. Then, however, Russia invades Finland and the soup king's daughter is reclaimed. With fewer ideals, this would have been a more entertaining film.

WILLIAM WHITEBAIT

PLAYS AND PICTURES

The Courtauld Institute—

This exhibition of architectural and decorative drawings, which remains open to the end of the month, will be of interest to those who take an interest in architectural drawings; to the general gallery-going public it may seem hardly worth the trouble that to get anywhere involves nowadays. The student, however, should certainly make the effort, if only to bring away with him the well annotated and illustrated catalogue. Bibiena is so much the fashion that three works from his pen will probably be regarded as the glory of the show. They will not, however, add much to his reputation even with those who are not disposed to exaggerate it. No. 8—a stage setting—is a typical piece of disorderly order, highly ingenious and slightly vulgar: the drawing is not good neither does it suggest good architecture. No. 33 is no better; but Mr. Roger Hinks' design (No. 7) is comely and satisfying. Probably the best things here are six projects on one sheet (No. 6) which may be attributed to Bernini. If these graceful and airy designs for gateways be compared with the sketch of a gateway at Blenheim by Vanbrugh (No. 49), the latter is made to appear positively loutish, and Swift's—or was it Abel Evans'—epitaph just:

"Lie heavy on him earth; for he
Laid many a heavy load on thee."

Sentimental curiosity will be pleased by John Smith's large water colour of Fonthill. It must have been a distressing edifice, and we may be thankful that within thirty years of its inception it had fallen into ruins.

THE COMING WEEK

SATURDAY, February 15th—

Civil Liberty in the Colonial Empire Delegate Conference. Conway Hall. And on Feb. 16th. Full particulars from Hol. 9671.

SUNDAY, February 16th—

K. B. Smellie: "Social Philosophy: Roman," I.S.T.D., 17 Manchester Street, 11.

"A Story of Austria," followed by Social and Dance, Austrian Centre, 126 Westbourne Terrace, W.2, 3.

MONDAY, February 17th—

Galton Luncheon, Lord Horder: "Eugenics in Wartime," Pinoli's Restaurant, 1. Tickets 4s., Eugenics Soc. 69 Eccleston Square, S.W.1.

Fabian International Affairs Group Snack Lunch. D. Vikhund: "Sweden Surrounded," 12 Gt. Newport Street, 1.

TUESDAY, February 18th—

Housing Centre Lunch, Prof. Eva G. R. Taylor: "The National Atlas," 13 Suffolk Street, S.W.1, 1.

John Parker: "Modern Turkey," Royal Institution, 2.30.

THURSDAY, February 20th—

Fabian Lunch, Vernon Bartlett: "Foreign Propaganda," Royal Hotel, Upper Woburn Place, 1. Tickets 3s.

First of six lectures at School of Slavonic Studies by Gleb Struve: "The Problem of Russia and Europe as Seen by Some Russian Thinkers," 1 Thornhaugh Street, W.C.1, 5.

Correspondence

THE LABOUR PARTY

SIR,—It may be appropriate for me to remark on some of the points affecting Labour Party organisation and policy raised by Mr. Garry Allighan and other correspondents.

Mr. Allighan suggests there has been some "shrewd" accountancy in the statement upon the Party's Finance presented to the Bournemouth Conference. Actually, the figures in the Statement of Accounts are in accordance with the facts. Affiliation Fees were reported separately, as: (*a*) arrears for 1938; (*b*) current, 1939; and (*c*) in advance for 1940.

In the Balance Sheet, all the fees paid in advance are shown (*a*) as liabilities, and (*b*) as assets—plain, accurate and straightforward.

Moreover, the Annual Report always contains a table of membership showing all the fluctuations during the 40 years from the inception of the Labour Representation Committee. The decreases in individual membership in 1938 and 1939 and the increases in Trade Union affiliations for the same years are reported in detail.

Mr. Allighan may not like the "Election Truce" or the fact that Labour is now in the Government, and that active Party politics are in commission for the present. The instinct of the Bournemouth Conference, however, was right. The immediate peril had to be faced. Internal national differences remain, but in the state of Europe and the world at large they are secondary.

The original Labour Representation Committee was not conceived as and never actually was a simple machine to secure Trade Union representation, either in Parliament or on Local Governing Authorities. The Fabian Society and the Independent Labour Party were integral factors, and made great contributions both in personnel and in policy.

During the War of 1914-18 also, there were gloomy prophets regarding the future of the Party, but the plans extending Party organisation coincident with the launching of its programme for a "New Social Order" belied all their fears. British Socialists and British Trade Unionists through the Labour Party gave an immense impetus to social advance in the post-war years. They tried to stem the vengeful foolishness of the Versailles peacemakers. History bears witness to their wisdom and their foresight.

Let it be clear: there have always been more "practical Socialists" in the Trade Unions than outside their ranks. In all parts of the country the plain Union man, like his wife, has played his great part in the Party—particularly in the Municipalities and in the hard grinding work that brought later success, nationally and locally. This work has not been spectacular. It may not have been particularly intellectual. Nevertheless, it has been splendid.

The ordinary men and women of Britain to-day are being commended for their steadfastness and courage, their confidence and their character. In some degree these qualities, native to our race, have been nurtured and strengthened by the years of struggle by the Trade Unions for better standards, by Socialism, for improved Social Services, and by innumerable working-class organisations—Co-operative, Friendly Societies, educational, and political among others.

The nation stands to-day determined to keep its freedom or perish in its defence. Labour men and women, Trade Unionists or Socialists, have not put their faith in cold storage because of the fight against Fascism.

Mr. George Shaw exaggerates when he suggests that the Party has been more interested in China and International affairs than "bread and butter" politics. In any case, China used to be very much "bread and butter" politics to the Lancashire mill workers at one time. Nazi domination is very much "bread and butter" politics to the subjugated nations—actually more bread and butter for Hitler's followers and less for those he has conquered.

However, the suggestion is false, as the Party's record on home politics fully testifies. The high standard of our social services is there for the world to see and imitate, and the Party's fight to improve their levels has been unceasing. It may be recalled that in 1931 the Party was smashed in resisting a 10 per cent. cut in unemployment benefit, which Liberal and Tory Leaders combined to inflict.

I would suggest there is no more need for a "Middle Class Union" then there is for an "Upper Class Union" in association with the Party. The Party ranks are open to all classes, and, believe me, the professional and aristocratic comrades can learn as much from the working-class comrades as ever they can teach them. Book-learning is good; experience is just as good, so far as rational practical politics are concerned. Combined in mutual trust they are invincible.

To-day, the immediate danger is that some of our intellectuals are taking the fighting of the War and the winning of the Peace too much for granted. The men and the women who are actually engaged in the task at home or abroad have no such notion.

Since 1931 in particular, the Party has studied and stimulated Socialist planning, and at the appropriate time these plans will require to be re-examined.

There may be a "blue print" of a new St. Paul's stored in safety somewhere, but, in the meantime, the Home Guard of young architects who spent the night of the City "blitz" battering out Hitler's incendiaries with the Cathedral prayer-mats seem to have the right perspective.

J. S. MIDDLETON,
Secretary.

Transport House (South Block),
Smith Square, S.W.1.

SIR,—"Subaltern," in his letter published in your issue of February 8th, asked for a Union or Society "to which professional and business people can belong." He calls attention to precisely those needs which membership of the Fabian Society can satisfy. Founded in 1883 and led for many years by Sidney and Beatrice Webb, the Fabian Society absorbed in 1939 the young and vigorous New Fabian Research Bureau. It now carries on a programme of research, lectures, propaganda, has weekly International Lunches, a Colonial Bureau, Summer Schools, one-day Conferences (the next is February 23rd). In a large output of books and pamphlets it applies Socialist thinking to current topics. In all of these activities there is ample scope for the work, knowledge and interests of Subaltern and his friends.

The Fabian Society is affiliated to the Labour Party, so that all Fabians are automatically in the Labour Movement, and the Society is able, through various channels, to put the views of its members at any time before influential persons or bodies both inside and outside the Labour Movement. The Society also sends delegates to the Annual Conference of the Labour Party, and its representative has for many years been elected to the National Executive in the group of women members. Locally, too, the branches of the Society can send delegates to local Parties and Trades Councils.

I would gladly send information about the Society to Subaltern and others and would welcome him and his friends as members. I realise that many middle-class people do not like spending time on the large amount of private business which necessarily has to be transacted at a local party meeting but I would point out that the committee rooms of a local Labour Party provide a fine political training and experience. Nor do I agree that "middle-class" members are frozen out—provided always that they will work in and with the Party, and that when there is a job to be done, be it envelope-stuffing or delivery, selling literature or speaking, they are willing and available to help.

JOHN PARKER, M.P.,
General Secretary.

Fabian Society,
11 Dartmouth Street,
London, S.W.1.

SITWELLISMUS

SIR,—In view of the result of a recent famous libel action, may I beg the hospitality of your columns to assure my numerous detractors that I do not intend to take action against them?

How necessary this is you will see when I tell you that only a month ago one of our leading critics assured the million readers of a great newspaper that my literary colleagues and myself had sunk into oblivion to give way to a new school of writers "since Dunkirk." Another line of my detractors is to say that I am an adolescent as a writer. It would be very difficult, I submit, to prove this without getting into very deep legal water, some of which would flow back into my overdraft. Other critics have compared both my writing and my profile unfavourably to Rupert Brooke. Is this fair comment? I have never even seen my profile, and it is, in no sense, my fault. Another exceedingly unfair line of attack is via my Christian name: Stephen Spender, Stephen Philips, "Stephen" in *The Well of Loneliness*, "Stephen" in *Ulysses*, etc.

It is pleasant to think that these jibes are now keeping the jibers, instead of me, awake. A Freudian trait in my character makes me forget the worst insults, but this thought is now engraved on my, and doubtless many other, hearts: *I doubt if Mr. Grigson forgets.*

However, there is another side to all this. Will those authors who may consider that I have defamed their reputation in the last six years kindly send me postcards, calling quits?

It would be a kindly act to throw open your personal columns to critics and defamed authors for a few weeks in order that a few public wounds may be healed and aired.

STEPHEN SPENDER

VICTORY FOR WHAT?

SIR,—The British public have still to grasp the inner significance of this war and of totalitarianism in the modern world. It has taken seventeen months of total war to convince even a small minority of the necessity of providing an alternative to Hitler's New Order in Europe, while few yet see that failure to do this will result in a totalitarian era.

It is necessary to keep in mind three fundamental facts: First, that the process of world economic collapse which led to the rise of Hitler is still in operation; second, that Europe has entered upon a new social and economic order and cannot under any circumstances go back to capitalist democracy; and third, that in the absence of a revolutionary change in Britain's social and international policy, the New World forecasts so freely being made will not be realised.

The process of capitalist collapse which started with the Russian Revolution in 1917, is now in its final phase, and in this war is being carried towards completion. Thus, unless an awakened Britain takes its courage in its hands and, acting on a higher social plane than it has done during the last thirty years—to go no further back—sweeps away social privilege, the basis of class and imperialist domination, economic conditions will arise after the war which will drive even that stronghold of democracy into the morass of totalitarianism.

What is certain is that there can be no going back to the Europe of 1939 or of 1938, not to speak of 1932. There is still the tendency in Britain to regard Hitler as the victor of demagogic agitation rather than as the offspring of economic despair arising from capitalist breakdown, and to put political issues before economic issues in all discussions of Peace Aims.

Talk of military victory is hot on many lips, but everywhere the utmost confusion exists as to what could be done with it if it were won.

The assumption seems to be that a military victory would be followed by the economic and democratic rehabilitation of France and Germany, and by the liberation of all the countries which Hitler has conquered or taken under control. Some go further and declare that we should assist the latter to recover by means of substantial loans and guarantees of food and raw materials.

In my submission such promises are not merely a delusion, but dangerous and even cruel, as without fundamental social changes in Britain, of which as yet there are no signs, catastrophic post-war economic conditions will prevent their being kept. It is necessary to face a few hard facts.

The present war is the culmination of the power politics of the last thirty years. The Great War, the Versailles Treaty, the slump of 1930, the Ottawa policy of the Big Empires, the rise to power of Hitler, the aggression of the last nine years, the Russo-German Pact and, finally, the present war, constitute a chain of events each of which is the logical consequence of its predecessors.

The declaration of war on Germany by Britain and France, in September, 1939, was made on behalf of the defence of liberty and the overthrow of Hitlerism. But Britain's relationships with Italy, Japan, China, Spain, Abyssinia, Manchuria, Czechoslovakia and even with Germany, since Hitler rose to power, make it abundantly clear that Britain is concerned about more things than liberty. It is, moreover, significant that as late as 1937 there was considerable support for Hitler in British Conservative circles, many, indeed, like Lord Londonderry being in favour of a pact with Germany as a means of combating Bolshevism.

About the end of 1937 it began to be realised in British financial circles that Hitler was not, as had been believed, the tool of finance-capital, but was vigorously applying a comprehensive policy of National Socialism and literally converting capitalist employers into civil servants. He had ideological ends of his own, which had been conceived while Germany lived on a financial avalanche as the result of capitalist breakdown. With consummate skill the Nazi leaders completely undermined German capitalism within five years.

It is also important to note the order of the transition from capitalism to dictatorship among the big Powers. Of the seven big Powers, the financially weakest, Russia, was the first to cross over—in 1917, in the midst of the Great War. Italy, the next financially weakest, followed in 1922, in the war's aftermath. Germany and Japan, the two strongest of the Have-not Powers collapsed in the catastrophic slump of 1930, while France, the weakest of the three big Empires has gone over to totalitarianism during the present war. Thus of the seven big Powers, only Britain and the U.S.A. remain to defend democracy. What are their chances of success?

Capitalist civilisation is collapsing by reason of the growing disparity between the power of production and that of consumption. This condition leads to glutted markets, economic crises and world unemployment on an ever-growing and more threatening scale. Things have now reached such a pass that in every new crisis one or more States passes over into totalitarianism.

The root cause of that contradiction is the class basis of capitalist civilisation whereby social, financial, economic and political power is concentrated in a small privileged class and some 80 per cent. of the population are subjected to perpetual impoverishment and social servitude. The real enemy of democracy is thus social privilege, the class basis of capitalist civilisation. It follows that the world can function henceforth only on a collective basis, and that, if democracy fails to provide the collectivism, dictatorship will.

Is British capitalism ready to face that issue, to recognise the inevitability of socialism, and that to apply itself wholeheartedly to the creation of a social commonwealth would be better for it than to seek safety in totalitarianism? A capitalism which lacks the imagination to adopt such a course will inevitably seek protection in totalitarianism when revolution and Communism threaten in the economic crises of the post-war era.

Let capitalism not be deceived, however, for even totalitarianism has its function, which it will neglect at its peril. Being the product of economic breakdown and social despair, Fascism eventually kicks away the ladder by which it climbed to power and thereafter pursues its own ideological ends. But two things it must do, once it has secured its necessary economic resources, viz., put the people into employment and spread abundance; otherwise it will be overthrown by revolution.

But in the process liberty perishes. Theoretically totalitarianism can, and in large measure probably will, fulfil the demands of economic man; but it imprisons the soul, to free which will constitute the supreme problem of the future.

Must that painful process be the lot of the entire human race? Cannot Britain stop the rot; can she not, even at this late hour put up a sound, sincere democratic socialist alternative to Hitler's New Order in Europe?

Failing that course—and about this let there be no illusions—there is no escape from world totalitarianism. Power politics, which are still operative in this war, will bring that super economic crisis in which world capitalism will finally collapse. Three factors alone insure this: First, the division of the world into four or five economic units (the logical outcome of monopolistic imperialism) now taking place will result in an enormous restriction of world trade; second, the paying for armaments to the U.S.A. and to the British Empire by means of British-held foreign securities and the cancellation of loans will result in a big drop in interest receipts, or "free" imports, and thus in the necessity of increasing our exports, possibly to the extent of £150 millions, in order to secure our normal supplies of food and raw materials, and third, the phenomenal intensification of production during this war through the speeding up of armaments manufacture and the extension of machine production in India and the Dominions and in the Latin Republics of S. America.

When the crash comes it will constitute the decisive crisis for democracy in Britain, and the class which declined to forgo its privileges in order to prevent it must be expected to defend those privileges even at the price of democracy.

Europe, however, no matter who wins the war, will from sheer necessity hold together as a totalitarian economic unit until such time as its soul, awakened and refreshed, divests itself of the evil spirit which now grips it.

In the meantime we in Britain look for changes which can spring only from a recognition of spiritual values, in particular the supreme value of friendly human relations born of regard for man as a human person. If we look in vain we shall move on to a totalitarian era led by men who sing the praises and carry the flag of democracy, their heads buried in fog and their feet in clay. WILFRED WELLOCK

12 Victoria Avenue,
Quinton,
Birmingham 32.

BOURGEOIS ETHICS

SIR,—In your review of John Strachey's book *A Faith to Fight For*, the following sentences occur: "Mr. Strachey has always been, and is, a Socialist. By that in a sentence he means, one who believes first that the hope of men consists in the state of mind that puts above everything else truth and love." This truthful description of Strachey's latest thesis shows the astonishing lengths to which a man can go when he loses contact with the forces fighting for Socialism and abandons the clear line of revolutionary Marxist thought and action.

We have only to refer to two of Mr. Strachey's recent books to see how differently he looks at things to-day. In *What Are We to Do?* he says, writing of a programme written by Lenin and Plekhanov, "The dictatorship of the proletariat, this programme states, amounts to the assumption by the working class of such power that the capitalists cannot prevent the abolition of capitalism and the introduction of Socialism. Thus correctly defined the doctrine of the dictatorship of the proletariat becomes the very linch-pin or cornerstone of scientific Socialist theory." In the *Theory and Practice of Socialism* he writes: "We can now make another definition of a socialist system of planned production for use. Such a system is one in which consumers' goods, but not means of production, pass into private hands."

These two quotations show Strachey as a Marxist explaining two of the fundamental points of Socialism, but his latest book might have been written by a Christian, Buchmanite, Quaker or Liberal. Apparently "truth and love" have taken the place of the hard facts of economics in his latest book.

81A, Parkholme Road, JOAN BUCKMAN
Dalston, E.8.

[The object of the article was to recall the fact that the aim of Socialism is a society based on "truth and love." Here, in theory, the Marxian is in agreement with the "idealist." The instrument must be an analysis of hard facts and a strategy based on that analysis. But, as Mr. Koestler and Mr. Strachey show, the values for which Socialists fight may be forgotten in the struggle and in the achievement of power.—ED. *N.S. & N.*]

SHELTER READING

SIR,—May I add a footnote to *Critic's* Comment in this week's issue on Paper-backed Books in Air-raid Shelters? Soon after the heavy raids on London began, this Institute, with the approval and collaboration of the Regional Commissioners for Civil Defence, began to instal libraries in London shelters. By now no fewer than 84 of the larger shelters have got such libraries, and many others are about to be provided. In some shelters it has been possible to equip a small reading room as well, and each library is in the care of a shelter marshal. The scheme has been made possible by numerous gifts in kind: a large gift of books from Penguin Books, a loan of chairs, tables and book cases by the L.C.C. and a grant from the Pilgrim Trust. A scheme of the same sort is about to be applied in such cities as Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, Bristol and Southampton. Among hundreds of comments we have received from men and women who use these libraries the most significant is that from a man of 65 who said the other day, "I never seemed to have the time to read before this."

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WIT SARCASTIC

SIR,—As one who relished the ironical wit of Mr. A. R. Watson's letter to the *Manchester Guardian* on January 23rd protesting against the B.B.C. ban on Sir Hugh Roberton, I was a little startled to find an extract from it heading your "This England" column yesterday. I had innocently supposed that the purpose of "This England" was to laugh at those who were unintentionally absurd, not to lift passages written with deliberate irony, and present them as "straight". . . NANCY NEWBIGIN

[We grovel, particularly as the joke was originally made by Critic some weeks earlier. In mitigation of sentence we may remark that in this matter the ironical and the "straight" lie uncomfortably close to one another. The remarks made by Mr. Duff Cooper about pacifist musicians and the radio (quoted in the current *This England*) were, it is reported, received with applause in the House last week.—ED., *N.S. & N.*]

Current Literature

BOOKS IN GENERAL

SOME heckling of short-story writers by Mr. George Orwell the other week made me look up Joyce's *The Dead*,* which Mr. Orwell puts on his personal list of the best short stories of the last generation. He was right there. *The Dead* is a story in the highest class. I remember having to report a dinner given by Belfast's political boosters years ago—as tough a collection of politicians as you could meet in the British Isles at that time—and hearing Tom Moore's *Oft in the Stilly Night* sung there when the cigars were lit. Tears were in the eyes of the tarnished city fathers, but I do not think the tears were maudlin. Joyce's *The Dead* dips into the same well of pathos from which Moore's song was drawn. In their drizzling lachrymose climate, the Irish seem to have—I do not know why—a more immediate access to a sentiment and a pathos which are purer, I think, than they are with us. In England they have been muddied by trader or the chapel's moralisings.

In *The Dead* and another story called *Grace*, Joyce reached the height of his talent as a writer of short stories. The other stories in *Dubliners* are awkward, provincial and often feeble. . . . They recall, not the Russian writers who are usually referred to in Irish criticism, but the work of one who is totally different: Gissing. There is the same amateurishness of touch, the same self-pity, the timid moan of the depressed adolescent as he furtively races down the streets, his head full of Araby and his ears tingling with guilty eavesdropping. There is above all the seamy, suburban, lower middle-class world of a thousand and one mingy preventions, mean refinements and vulgar hopes. Joyce is, of course, no evangelist. He was a self-torturer, torturing himself with the things he hated. But only part of Gissing was an unsuccessful Wells; the other part, which wrote *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, was that crushed sixteen-year-old poetic Edwardian clerk who also sneaks ashamed through Joyce's seedy Dublin, torn between girls and the puritan Catholic conscience. Both writers continued their secretive paths into the charmed world of eloquence, so that it is hard to know which is more recondite: Finnegan's Dublin or Gissing's narcotic dreams of ancient Greece and Rome. It is when one compares Joyce and Gissing as realists that one sees Joyce's enormous advance on the Englishman.

Putting down what people "really say" is the chief innovation which the younger writers have made in the novel and especially in the short story. The interesting thing is to find Joyce doing in 1914 what was thought to have started much later in writers like Ernest Hemingway and can be seen at its best in Christopher Isherwood's Berlin diaries or Mr. Frank O'Connor's admirable last novel, *Dutch Interior*, a book which I think is likely to become a landmark in Anglo-Irish letters. But I had better give an example of Joyce's dialogue. I will take it from the story called *Grace*, which describes how the friends of a Dublin drunkard plot to reform him by persuading him to make a religious "retreat." The drunkard is in bed recovering from a bad bout, the friends open a bottle of whiskey and they lead up to the object of their visit by general religious gossip:

> "I often heard he was one of the most intellectual men in Europe," said Mr. Power. "I mean apart from his being Pope."
>
> "So he was," said Mr. Cunningham, "if not *the* most so. His motto, you know, as Pope, was Lux upon Lux—Light upon Light."
>
> "No, no," said Mr. Fogarty eagerly. "I think you're wrong there. It was Lux in Tenebris, I think—Light in Darkness."
>
> "Oh yes," said Mr. McCoy. "Tenebrae."
>
> "Allow me," said Mr. Cunningham positively. "It was Lux upon Lux. And Pius IX his predecessor's motto was Crux upon Crux—that is Cross upon Cross—to show the difference between their two pontificates."
>
> The inference was allowed. Mr. Cunningham continued.
>
> "Pope Leo, you know, was a great scholar and a poet."
>
> "He had a strong face," said Mr. Kernan.
>
> "Yes," said Mr. Cunningham. "He wrote Latin poetry."
>
> "Is that so?" said Mr. Fogarty.
>
> Mr. McCoy tasted his whiskey contentedly and shook his head with a double intention, saying:
>
> "That's no joke, I can tell you."
>
> "We didn't learn that, Tom," said Mr. Power, following McCoy's example, "when we went to the penny-a-week school."
>
> "There was many a good man went to the penny-a-week school with a sod of turf under his oxter," said Mr. Kernan sententiously. "The old system was the best; plain, honest, education. None of your modern trumpery. . . .
>
> "Quite right," said Mr. Power.
>
> "No superfluities," said Mr. Fogarty. He enunciated the word and then drank gravely.
>
> "I remember reading," said Mr. Cunningham, "that one of Pope Leo's poems was on the invention of the photograph—in Latin, of course."
>
> "On the photograph," exclaimed Mr. Kernan.
>
> "Yes," said Mr. Cunningham.
>
> He also drank from his glass.
>
> "Well you know," said Mr. McCoy, "isn't the photograph wonderful when you come to think of it?"
>
> "O, of course," said Mr. Power. "Great minds can see things."
>
> "As the poet says: 'Great minds are very near to madness,'" said Mr. Fogarty.
>
> "Tell me, Martin," said Mr. Kernan. "Weren't some of the Popes—of course not our present man, or his predecessor, but some of the old Popes—not exactly—you know—up to the knocker?"

It was not clear from Mr. Orwell's remarks whether he simply preferred stories of action or whether, when he complained about the lack of plot in modern stories, he really meant lack of subject and situation. Now the situation in the Joyce story which I have quoted is very important. Edwardian vulgarity did not reach greater depths than it reached in Joyce's Dublin. For the Pollys and Kipps of the English lower middle class there was release, expansion, social reform, they had the fantasy of being Davids going out against the Goliath of the monopolies, of knowing they were the most vital part of the community. For the Fogartys of Dublin, life was stagnant. You either cleared out if you had ability or you sozzled in the snugs, and after a brief sparkle as "one of the boys," you settled into a mediocrity all the more awful for its voluble delusion that Dublin is the centre of sanctity, culture and the universe. Joyce went round Dublin picking out "the paycocks," the seamy pub spouters, the sodden commercials, the pontiffs of the Terenure tram and the Rathgar soirée. He concentrates on the half-baked, the windy ignoramus, the enormous brain which turns out to be the size of a pea. Sinn Fein was preaching bloodshed at this time: Ireland was too prosperous and content. Joyce describes the horror of that content and himself left Ireland, perhaps, because he saw that it was this class which would come into power after the revolution.

When novelists wrote only about people in whom a common degree of education was assumed, naturalness of dialogue was unnecessary, except in the character parts. Meredith, who was praised especially for his dialogue, gave his people speeches that were no more than Meredith capping his own repartee. It was the convention—it goes right back to Scott—only for the uneducated to speak either natural or vernacular or undisciplined speech. It was comic relief. Wells used lower middle-class vernacular for comic effects even in his early books Wells ran away from the uncomfortable reality in which his characters lived. A writer like Joyce does not run away. The talk is the man. In *Grace* he might almost be said to write a story of ideas by default, or by presenting garbled ideas. In *The Dead* he writes a story of serious feeling about a suburban party which Wells, in his horror, would have guyed and which Gissing would have sentimentalised. And Joyce makes a double point in doing so: he draws a faithful picture of a stagnant, complacent and hopeless group of people—his contemporary situation—and, by letting them speak for themselves, he gets the pathos of these fixed, solid, eventless, heavy-footed lives. Their drama is—what? It is the fundamental human drama: shoddy though they are, they will die. Gabriel goes to the window and hears "the snow falling faintly through the universe and faintly falling like the descent of their last end upon all the living and the dead." Tragic it is not, for they are not great people in a great situation; but the pathos is real.

No imaginative writer puts down exactly what people "really say." A real dialogue creates a character, a world, even a statement of ideas, between the lines and is really a collection of carefully chosen suggestions. The reader is all the time working these out, filling the gaps. The story appears through the talk gradually like a face appearing at a window. There is a very satisfying excitement in watching this figure take shape, an excitement quite as definite as that which we get from a story of action. The fault of so many proletarian stories where the people speak a natural dialogue is that no selection has been done; they are mere transcriptions without subject. They are not windows, but blank walls. Dad pinches son's wages. Who cares? Son might just as well pinch Dad's. Both are plots, if you want plot, and the newspaper here can beat the story-writer at his own game. Better than that (one agrees with Mr. Orwell), preserve the tricks of the short-story writer, the good old sting in the tail. But better still understand that the subject of a story is not the events in the story, nor its dialogue nor its action, nor its people, but something which arises from and lives between all these.

V. S. PRITCHETT

* *Dubliners*. By James Joyce. Cape. 3s. 6d.

INQUEST ON GENEVA

A Great Experiment: An Autobiography. By VISCOUNT CECIL. *Cape.* 16s.

The number of people who have conducted a post-mortem and inquest on the body of the League of Nations during the last few years is considerable, and the verdicts are almost as various as the coroners, ranging from "wilful murder" through "natural causes" to "justifiable homicide." There are even a few optimistic coroners who seem to doubt whether the body is entirely a corpse, while others, though regretfully admitting that the sheep has become mutton, comfort themselves with belief that mutton can rise again as sheep. It is significant and appropriate that Viscount Cecil's autobiography should be very little more than another inquest on Geneva. If on its twenty-first birthday the League, instead of being immobilised by infant paralysis, had been strong and vigorous, it would have owed its success mainly to the work of an American, a Norwegian, a Frenchman, and an Englishman—Professor and President Wilson, the explorer Nansen, the orator Briand, and the hereditary statesman Lord Robert Cecil—each of them a characteristic product of the finest qualities (and some of the weaknesses) in the four national traditions. Viscount Cecil has worked longer, more persistently, devotedly, and intelligently than any of the other three for the League's success. Exactly twenty-five years

ago, in the second year of the Great War, he was a Cabinet Minister in charge of the blockade of Germany. Even in those early days the horrible ineptitude of war had convinced him that the major problem of our civilisation was its prevention, and that it could not be prevented without the establishment of some kind of international authority. In the autumn of 1916 he found time to put before the Cabinet a memorandum outlining a scheme for the prevention of war and providing for sanctions against an aggressor State. It is significant that even at that early date he was personally of opinion that some limitation of armaments was of the greatest importance for such a scheme, that in his first draft he had included provisions for it, and that only the criticisms of Sir Eyre Crowe induced him—perhaps wrongly—to remove them from his memorandum.

From that day Viscount Cecil devoted himself to and identified himself with the work of preventing war and establishing the League of Nations. In the Commission on the League at the Peace Conference, as President Wilson himself said, "the labouring oar fell to" Lord Robert Cecil, and it was chiefly due to him that the Covenant came "out of the confusion of debate in its original integrity." From the day of its creation up to the present moment his political life has been intimately bound up with that of the League, and he has continually taken part in its work as British representative on the Council, the Assembly, the Commissions, and Committees. He is, in fact, the only European statesman of the front rank who has devoted himself entirely, without any regard for his own career, to preventing war by an endeavour to make the League system work. His autobiography, in which he tells the story of the crusade of this great experiment and failure, is, therefore, of great interest to anyone who is concerned about the cause of death and the possibility of resurrection. It is a characteristic piece of work, direct, plain-spoken, high-minded, and relieved every now and then by a streak of wry, disillusioned humour which reminds one of the author's father.

Viscount Cecil must be numbered among those whose verdict is that the League was murdered, but that it can and must be resurrected. Indeed, he is already working as devotedly for the establishment of the new League as he did for the creation and success of the old. Whether it is reasonable to work for resurrection must depend upon our verdict in the inquest on Geneva. Why did the League fail? There is, of course, no simple or single answer to such a question—it is only the simple people who believe in simple answers. The causes of so complicated an event as the paralysis of the League are necessarily themselves complicated. The question should be, not "why did the League fail?" but rather "what were the most important causes of the League's failure, and was the existence of any of them inevitable so that the failure of an organisation like the League was and must be inevitable?"

Viscount Cecil's book reveals more clearly than most one reason why the League was ineffective as an instrument for the prevention of war and why its powers atrophied. His evidence on the point is peculiarly valuable because he was so continuously and closely in touch with the men and machinery of government in this country who played a prominent part in the debacle. Many people on both sides of the watershed which divides the Right from the Left in politics, as soon as the Covenant was signed, immediately began to regard the "League" as one more "personification" added to the ferocious family of nations. It took its place beside John Bull and Marianne, Uncle Jonathan and the Russian Bear. "It" or "she" could act or not act quite irrespective of men and governments. To the Conservative "she" was a silly, interfering old woman at Geneva, to the Lab-Liberal a goddess of peace *ex machina*. This was and is one of those political illusions which are almost as important and disastrous as the economic determination of history. There was no old woman or goddess at Geneva; there was nothing there except a revolutionary method of conducting the relations between States. And whether even that was there depended upon whether governments and peoples, statesmen and the inarticulate mob which drives statesmen up steep places towards heaven or down steep places into the sea, adopted the method and turned their "foreign policies" upside down by substituting for power and war the League system of law, order and co-operation. The "League" simply could not exist at all unless it was built into the foreign policy of each State and the foreign policy of each State built into it.

One of the main causes why the League failed was that practically none of the statesmen who determined the foreign policy of the Great Powers had any realisation of this vital fact. Viscount Cecil holds—and few who study the history of Europe from 1919 to 1939 will disagree with him—that at most times the attitude of the British Government was a dominating factor in the League. That attitude was determined at the most crucial moments by the Conservative Party, the Conservative Government of Mr. Baldwin, and by the National Government. It is here that Viscount Cecil's evidence from the inside is so valuable. He shows that his Conservative colleagues were "not, generally speaking, hostile to the League." Mr. Baldwin, for instance, was "temperamentally in its favour." But both he and they looked upon it "as a kind of excrescence." It must be carefully quarantined in Geneva and not get mixed up in the "real" foreign policy

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of Great Britain. The results, if the League was really a great experiment in the prevention of war, were both ludicrous and lamentable. Viscount Cecil, for instance, joined the first Baldwin Cabinet as Lord Privy Seal on the understanding that he should be in charge of League affairs. Lord Curzon, the Foreign Secretary, absolutely refused to have him inside the Foreign Office. When Austen Chamberlain became Foreign Secretary he took up the same position as Curzon. That meant that, though in theory the League was to be the most powerful instrument for preventing war, it had no place in the Foreign Office. The old granny could do cross-stitch in Geneva and Lord Robert Cecil visit her there occasionally, but the Foreign Secretary was uninterested; he was conducting the real foreign policy in Downing Street, and the League had nothing to do with that. In small things and in large this attitude persisted until the end. When Viscount Cecil represented Great Britain on the Temporary Mixed Commission, upon whose labours depended the possibility of disarmament and, therefore, the whole question of war and peace, the War Department refused to give him any technical help and he had to rely for that kind of information upon the French technical adviser. These may seem to be unimportant incidents. But they were not. They were part of the same attitude towards the League and, therefore, to the whole question of war and peace, which can be seen in the general policy of Lord Baldwin, Mr. Neville Chamberlain, and, it may be added, Ramsay MacDonald. To them the League was an excrescence, an old granny of Geneva to whom you had to be polite during election time, but who must not be allowed to poke her old nose into the Foreign Office or "interfere with" foreign policy. This attitude had the full support of the overwhelming majority in the Conservative Party, and, because of the immense influence of Britain in the years between the two wars, it largely determined the history of the League. Its logical results were Manchuria, Abyssinia, Spain, and the policy of appeasement.

Whether it was the "real" foreign policy of the Baldwins, Chamberlains, and Hoares, or whether it was the old granny or goddess of peace at Geneva who failed may be left to the verdict of history. But one lesson from these events is clear. There can be no stable peace in Europe between nations if their relations are based upon the anarchical use of power by sovereign independent States. If this system is to be revolutionised, the independent use of power must be controlled and a system of law and order substituted. But such a revolution and new system cannot be treated as an "excrescence" upon our policy. On the contrary, the system must be built into our Foreign Office and our foreign policy, and our foreign policy must be built into the system.

LEONARD WOOLF

FAMILY PORTRAIT

Lady Bessborough and Her Family Circle. Edited by the EARL OF BESSBOROUGH in collaboration with A. ASPINALL. *John Murray.* 15s.

Beautiful and witty, sensible and warm-hearted, Lady Bessborough, like the so dissimilar Elizabeth Bennet and Anna Karenina, is a heroine who answers closely to man's dreams of what a woman should be. Every new scrap about her is welcome, like a letter or telephone-call from a woman one is fond of; and there is a touch of jealousy in the dislike we feel for Lord Granville. The present Lord Bessborough, provoked by the mistakes of fact and interpretation in recent books about his great-great-grandmother, is concerned chiefly to exhibit her as a dutiful daughter, an adoring sister, an affectionate mother and a dearly-loved wife. Of course, of course, one hastens to respond, we never doubted it: she was a paragon, a darling; and to be in her husband's shoes was the next best thing to being in Granville's.

Lord Bessborough thought so himself. A kind-hearted *cognoscente*, he had a lot to put up with: his wife was for years an invalid; she ran up debts; she had two children by another man. Yet he knew himself to be lucky: "I have no wish on earth but to make you comfortable and happy," he wrote thirteen years after their marriage, and he was broken by her death. The two chief witnesses on the other side are her niece, Harriet Cavendish, and Byron. To Harriet, Lady B. was a rackety harum-scarum, a friend of her detested step-mother, and the mistress, no less devoted for having been discarded, of her husband. To Byron she was "Lady Blarney," a gushing busybody, the champion of the pestilent Caroline. (Re-reading his letters to Lady Melbourne, I have been struck by his likeness to the incomparably caddish hero of Montherlant's tetralogy.) But these unfair judgments were not based merely on personal prejudice. Lady Bessborough was always fairly glowing and brimming with emotion. Going to church was hardly less enjoyable than going to Granville—both experiences excited the most pleasing sentiments of fervour and gratitude. Her mother and her niece, belonging to different periods, were unable to understand this; and to Byron, for similar reasons, she seemed simply a fraud. She must be seen in historical perspective, a Woman of Feeling, produced by the Age of Rousseau, Greuze and Mackenzie.

The main source for our knowledge of Lady Bessborough remains *The Correspondence of Lord Granville Leveson-Gower*, edited by Castalia Lady Granville. (She not only bowdlerised the text but destroyed many of Lady Bessborough's letters, and made the rest inaccessible till 1965. If so shocking an act was to be perpetrated, surely it should have been left to Lady Bessborough's descendants.) Mrs. Villiers's *Grand Whiggery* and Sir George Leveson-Gower's *Hary-o* contain further documents, while Miss Colburne Mayne's *Regency Chapter* is an interpretation of the story with few new facts. The book under review has been edited carefully by Lord Bessborough and Mr. Aspinall. (May I suggest that on page 207 "Henerica" is obviously the wife of Henry Lord Holland, and "Arajuiz" not Aragués but Aranjuez? That on page 250 "facherez" is a mistake for "lâcherai"? And that on page 68 "the little French girl" is not Caroline St. Jules, who had nothing French about her except her fictitious surname, but Corisande de Gramont, who lived at Devonshire House as a refugee from the Revolution?)

The book can be warmly recommended, but only to those already familiar with the personages. It contains unpublished letters from Lady Bessborough, her mother, her husband, her three children, and her nephew, Hartington. (There is, incidentally, a sensitive letter from the Regent that makes one understand why he could be called the First Gentleman of Europe.) The result is to display the characters in relation to one another from a variety of angles, as in the amusing letters about the Duke's marriage to Lady Elizabeth. We first meet the eleven-year-old Henrietta on a tour with her parents, meeting the Prince de Ligne and Mme. du Deffand, and greedily recording in her diary "the most shocking sights," gibbets and charnel-houses—she is already all a-quiver with sensibility. At the age of nineteen she married Duncannon, though there were many, she confessed, whose manners and conversation she liked better:

> I have a better chance of being reasonably happy with him than with most people I know. But there are some things which frighten me sadly, he is so grave & I am so giddy, I do not deceive myself about my own faults, I know I have thousands, I perceive it more & more every day, and to plunge into the world with such a head as mine, I hope the heart is not bad, but indeed I sometimes almost doubt that, but I will not plague you any more with my Jeremiades for I am very low.

In due course her mother had reason to worry. In 1786, she wrote: "If you could know (but God forbid you ever should) what I have suffered, my dearest Harriet, about you and your sister for years past." I suspect there was more than gambling behind this groan, but we still know nothing of Lady Bessborough's indiscretions before she met Granville. A worthy woman, with all the bourgeois and Victorian virtues, who visited the poor and

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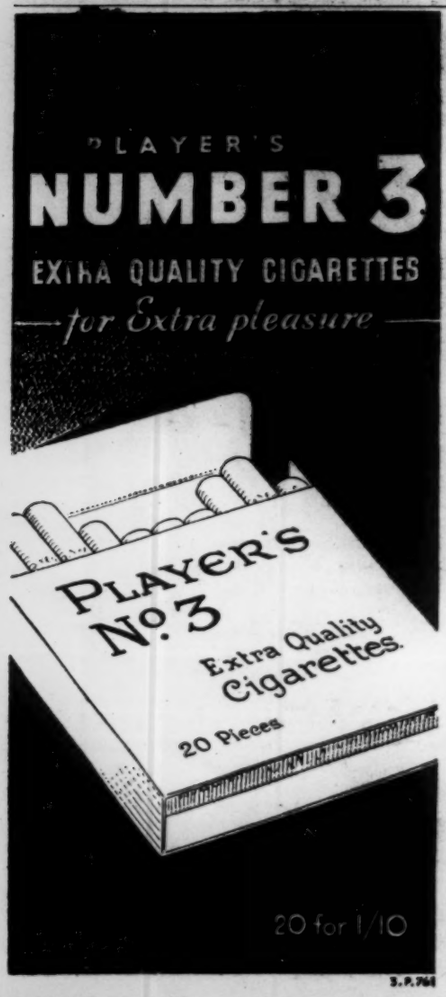

made nets to save her currants from the birds, what had Lady Spencer done to deserve such fascinating, such desperate, daughters as Lady B. and the Duchess of Devonshire? Hopefully she would report the "very good sermon from the vicar against the danger of bad connections and encouraging vice." It was no use. "Who knows," she writes, "if I had had more firmness, how much it might have operated upon your dear sister's conduct & your own, & what bitter regrets it might have saved us all." There was worse to come, for the poor lady lived to see her granddaughter Caroline a public show. She may not be likeable but her affection always prevailed over her disapproval. And here is an odd new fact about her. She lent money to the Queen of Naples and the disreputable Mme. Talleyrand—and dunned them, of course with no success. Lady Spencer, it appears, qualified devoutness with snobbery.

Lady Bessborough must have been delightful as a mother. When she is abroad for her health (she seems for years to have been consumptive) her sons at Harrow, which sounds a nice, soft school, write to her about their pleasure in lead soldiers, hoops and peg-tops. She answers lovingly with descriptions and little drawings of foreign scenes in which their father helps. Then Caroline begins to grow up, a clever, lively girl, who promises to be as delicious as her mother. She gets herself engaged to William Lamb, and Lady Bessborough loathes his mother, Lady Melbourne, whom she justly considers hard and ambitious. (The Melbournes, moreover, were *parvenus*, from outside the great Whig cousinage.) No matter, Caroline is happy; and "My darling Love," Lady Bessborough writes, "Your letter makes me cry & then laugh at myself for crying. The truth is we are two simpletons, & unlike what mother and daughter ought to be." At first everything goes swimmingly. Caroline describes to her grandmother how she is reading Hume, the Bible and Newton on the Prophecies. She asks her mother to write for her a list of "The principal dates and events, wars, risings, etc., from Romulus till the time of Constantine the Great." But in her fanciful letters to her cousin Hartington, who adored her, another Caroline emerges. In one of these she asks about her cousin Hary-o's wedding to Granville, from which she had been mysteriously excluded. "Send me an account of the ceremony, no soul writes me word what happened, who was affected, how Ld. G. behaved, if Harriot was unhappy, how she was drest, what she wore. . . . Was mama at the ceremony?" Is the answer, one wonders, in the muniment room at Chatsworth, for a hundred and thirty years later we are just as inquisitive as Caroline was about this delicate occasion. Her letter is signed "Sophia Heathcote," others are signed "Molly Peacok," "William Rufus-Rex" and "Syrop of Elderob." Often she breaks into doggerel—"I've got a gnac at rhyming"—and Selina Trimmer, who so successfully caught Mrs. Woolf's attention, often bobs up:

> The cowslip & the lemon pale
> with Selly's cheek might vie,
> But never maid that was not frail
> had such a jet black eye.

A charming gift for nonsense, one might think. Indeed, nobody now seems to recognise quite how bewitching Caroline could be; and her letters would alone make this a valuable book. But there is madness in them, the unexplained madness that finally overwhelmed Caroline and was transmitted to her son. She had much of her mother's goodness as well as her charm, but none of her sense.

Our intense interest in these distant figures is easily dismissed as a sign of an unhealthy "escapism," but there is more to it than that. The Devonshire House set had the luck to live in an interglacial period. How to-day can we expect young women to compare in wit, wisdom and elegant generosity with Lady Bessborough? And where, if such women existed, would be found the men worthy of their love? We have been reduced to the cultivation of a single virtue, the bleak fortitude necessary for survival. These personages, with all their faults, remain exemplary by their complete self-realisation. Lacking the rare genius of the artist or the saint, they show what luxuriant flowers the human spirit can put forth in a balmy climate. They are, moreover, as real to us as the characters in Saint-Simon, Tolstoy or Proust. Thus we are grateful for every new and enlightening detail, as we should be for a newly discovered passage from our favourite novelist. And when we seek their company, we escape, indeed, but we escape from a nightmare or a bedlam, into the daylight of a healthy and smiling landscape.

RAYMOND MORTIMER

WAR AIMS

Programme for Victory. *Routledge.* 5s. (*Labour Book Service*, 2s. 6d.)

Three questions trouble those—an increasing number, I think—who are not satisfied to regard the war as simply the result of the evil ambitions of one or two men but consider it a consequence of deep-seated maladies in our international society and in the nineteenth century liberalism which used to pass as democracy. They are: (1) Is it possible to win the war in such a way as to offer a reasonable chance of preserving and extending democracy after it? (2) Can democracy provide the economic security and social stability the lack of which bred Fascism and Nazism? (3) Can the centralised economic control which seems necessary to do this be made compatible with the liberties and individual rights we have come to regard as the soul of democracy? I state these questions baldly and badly. Each obviously raises a host of others. They have to be answered if there is to be a reasonable hope of establishing the better society ordinary men and women have a right to expect after the war and are increasingly being led to expect. It is encouraging, and a sign of democratic vitality, that there should now be a steady stream of books attempting to answer one or all of them.

Programme For Victory is such an attempt by six eminent Fabians, or rather by five Fabians and one philosophical anarchist. The Fabians are Harold Laski, Harold Nicolson, W. M. Macmillan, Ellen Wilkinson and G. D. H. Cole. The anarchist at the Fabian tea party and, despite the nicest Fabian hospitality, not altogether comfortable there, is Herbert Read. The book is properly entitled *Programme For Victory*, because all the authors, whether they derive from Marx, Kropotkin, Keir Hardie or even, as is perhaps the case with Professor Macmillan, from Livingstone, are united in believing that there can be no hope of an advance towards a stable and progressive democratic society without a British victory first—thus demonstrating the superiority of a Fabian intellectual training over a Communist one. Omnibus volumes of this character are not always satisfactory, especially when, as in this case, the contributions began their lives as spoken lectures. But, although it has some of the defects congenital to its form and although all the essays are not of equal merit, this volume should be a very useful stimulus to a wider discussion of the means to victory and the ends of victory. Laski's essay is, I think, the most successful; Read's and Cole's the most stimulating. The other three are sound, sensible and often illuminating—Professor Macmillan, for example, provides a badly needed corrective to some generalisations current on the Left about the colonies—but they do not

Julian Huxley

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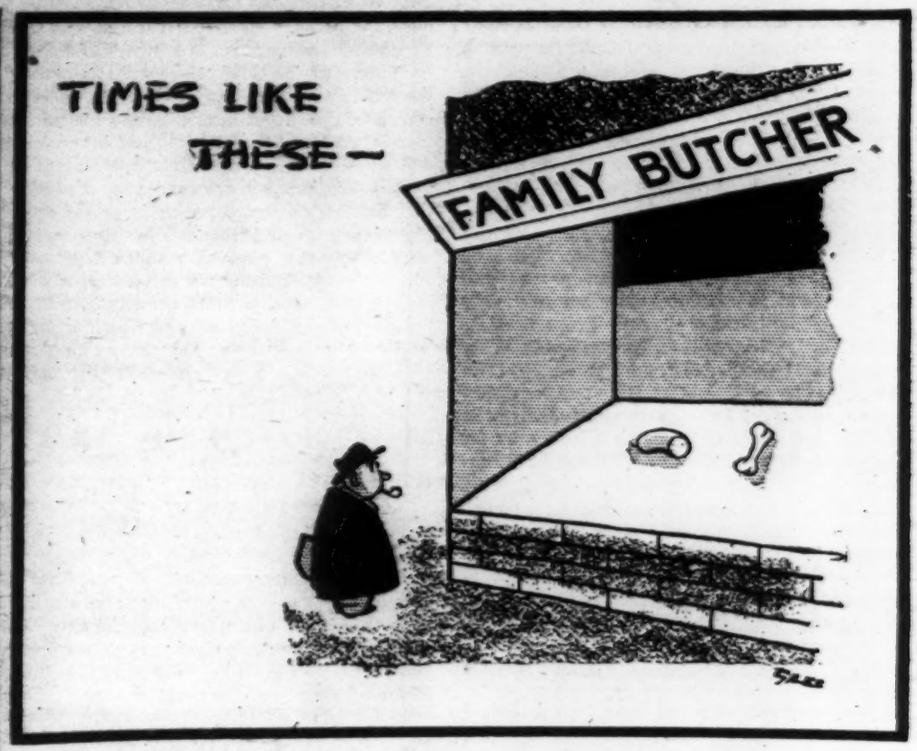

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make the same impact upon the mind as these others. Laski, I think, puts the case for fighting this war as a European revolution as soundly, as logically and as persuasively as it could possibly be put in the space. At the same time he has a number of concrete suggestions to offer on British policy, at home, in the Empire and abroad, which deserve the closest attention. He gives an intelligent and inspiring answer to question number one. Read and Cole are concerned primarily with questions two and three. They are at once complementary and yet in a real and important sense deeply antagonistic. Read should be read first and Cole immediately after. Read is concerned ostensibly with culture but, in fact, with the question of what are the basic values in life and how they can be preserved in a society which finds itself driven to place more and more power in the hands of the executive. By culture he means not a kind of stucco, plastered on to the front of modern industrial civilisation while the slums at the back are left untouched, but the expression of a true freedom. And he is profoundly sceptical as to the fate of that real culture at the hands not merely of a totalitarian state but of any large modern state. "The only freedom that matters," he thinks, "is the freedom to dance," and he has the gravest doubts whether that freedom can exist in any society whose course is shaped by the kind of centralised control which modern economic developments seem to most people—but not to him—to demand. He expresses, I think, an attitude of protest, perhaps of over-emphasised protest, rather than a closely considered political philosophy. Nevertheless the problem he poses is profoundly important to civilisation. Cole, sympathising with that attitude but believing much more than Read in the beneficence and flexibility of governments of the right colour, tries to give an answer and a reassurance. He does not perhaps altogether succeed and when he states his willingness, if it comes to a choice, to sacrifice all the older values and all the things we believe to be good in our present society to construct a new socialist civilisation I am driven to wonder a little what he means by socialism and what by civilisation. But it is only fair to say that he would not welcome any such sacrifice, that he does not believe it to be necessary and that he is convinced that it is possible to build an infinitely better society without it than with it. His essay, like the whole volume of which it is a part, is a sensible contribution to the business of beginning to build such a society whilst we are still at war with those who hate it.

FRANCIS WILLIAMS

* * * * *

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writes:—"A very remarkable and very valuable book. His analysis of the world situation is brilliant."

252 pages. 7s. 6d. net.

SECKER & WARBURG

THE PEOPLE'S ARMY

Home Guard for Victory! By HUGH SLATER. *Gollancz. 2s. 6d.*

The best of the Home Guard manuals issued hitherto, this book is mainly technical, but in the two final chapters it touches discreetly on the political problems which are never separable from the details of military organisation. The reforms it suggests all have the implied aim of making the Home Guard more definitely into a People's Army and breaking the grip of the retired colonel with his pre-machine-gun mentality. Looking back to last summer, it is difficult to say how far it was by design and how far an inevitable result of the English class-structure that positions of command in the Home Guard fell almost without exception into middle- and upper-class hands. But they did so, with the result that what might have been a definitely anti-Nazi force became a poor relation of the Regular Army, patriotic but politically neutral. Some time this year, invasion or no invasion, the Home Guard will have to decide finally what kind of force it is to be, and the political and the purely military developments will move in concert, the one reacting on the other like the opposite rims of a wheel.

The problem comes up in an especially difficult form in connection with parade-ground drill, to which Mr. Slater devotes a chapter. It is notorious that much of the drill practised in the British Army dates back to the eighteenth century and has no direct connection with modern war. A recruit is taught to slope and order his rifle for months before he is taught to aim it, and though a defeat in the field usually enforces more realistic notions for the time being, with every lull in the fighting or every period between wars the emphasis on heel-clicking, butt-slapping, etc., comes back. There is much controversy in the Home Guard as to the value of parade-ground drill, and the difference of opinion goes deeper than is sometimes realised. Usually it is true that people of reactionary outlook are believers in spit and polish and people of "Left" opinions have a guerilla attitude towards war. This difference holds good in details which at first sight are merely ridiculous. Thus, at this moment, if you believe that Britain should declare her war-aims and that Hitler will be defeated by European revolution, you probably also believe that a soldier when springing to attention should bring his left heel towards his right upon the flattest possible arc. If you are of the opinion that "our only aim is to beat the Boche" and "the only good German is a dead one," you probably believe that the left foot should be lifted into the air and brought down with a loud stamp. The whole question was thrashed out at great length in the Republican armies during the Spanish civil war. Aiming at turning the Home Guard into a quasi-revolutionary People's Army, Mr. Slater is naturally hostile to saluting and button-polishing, but as a soldier he realises that military efficiency is impossible without discipline and discipline probably inseparable from drill of some kind. There is no doubt that morale is bound up with what is usually called a "soldierly carriage" and even with certain minutiae of dress. Most men feel braver with a tight belt round their waists, for example. Mr. Slater pleads, therefore, for a new kind of drill based on the things soldiers actually have to do, such as getting in and out of lorries, throwing grenades from a prone position, and the like. No doubt something of the sort will ultimately be evolved, though only against fierce opposition; when the British Army began a few years ago to march in threes instead of fours it was a first step in this direction.

Most of the technical portions of this book, on street-fighting, tank-fighting, camouflage, etc., are admirable, and have already been much used by Home Guard commanders in their lectures. The weakest chapter is that dealing with the probable method of a German invasion. It rules out every thinkable scheme as foredoomed to failure, and might have the effect of spreading undue optimism. But the general effect of the book can be nothing but good. Mr. Slater and those associated with him at Osterley Park and Hurlingham played an important part in restoring national morale last summer, and this book is a continuation of the same process. It is cheap at half a crown, and the diagrams are striking and informative.

GEORGE ORWELL

LONDON STREETS

The Streets of London Through the Centuries. By THOMAS BURKE. *Batsford. 10s. 6d.*

This is a "sitting" subject for Mr. Burke. When he is not writing another of his own books about London, I imagine him busily reading the innumerable works of predecessors. In *The Streets of London* he draws on these resources with refreshing frequency; what he has seen himself, what he has lifted from journalists and poets of the past, combine to make a vivid picture of his favourite city. He illustrates his subject in more than the usual Batsford sense; for the hundred or so admirably chosen illustrations are matched by as many slabs of quotation from sources most of us know only by name, if at all: John Lydgate, Fitz-stephen, Dekker, Shadwell, Ned Ward, Pierce Egan, etc., as well as broadsheets, melodramas, almanacks and phrase-books of all periods. Most of these, apart from scurrility, are outside the rather pallid reach of anthologists.

The present is a good time for looking back. In the lull between Blitzes one can enjoy both the consolation of the past and self-congratulation on having escaped it. Black as the streets are at the moment, dangerous, and filled with obstacles, they are probably a good deal safer for the average citizen than in most previous centuries. The link-boy probably provided a less trustworthy light than an electric torch; the Tubes to-day are a haven of elegance and comfort compared with many Victorian shelters for the poor; we can stroll through Soho without being clubbed, and past Marble Arch without expecting to see half-a-dozen unfortunates strung up for theft. (Public hangings, by the way, extended into Victorian times.) And at different periods, plagues and fires have caused as much destruction and evacuation as air raids. Mr. Burke's chapters, indeed, leave an impression of a town where life could never be enjoyed for long without the blood-letting of private murders or of street-fighting to which the inhabitants would flock as to a football match. Some exaggeration, no doubt, comes from the bird's-eye-view of the author and his fondness for strong colours. The gangster (dandy killer or highwayman) seems at all times to have been a popular hero. Mr. Burke quotes

the following speech, apparently from a Tudor play:

> I have cracked as many blades as thou hast done nuts. The bawdy houses have paid me tribute; there durst not a whore set up, unless she have agreed with me first for opening her shop windows. . . . All the tenpenny alehouses would stand every morning with a quart-pot in their hand, saying "Will it please your worship drink?" He that hath not done so, had been sure to have had his sign pulled down and his lattice carried away the next night.

Curiously enough, Mr. Burke does not mention *The Beggar's Opera*, which did so much to crystallise sentiment about the underworld, though he quotes Gay in other connections. Noisy brawling in which all could join was so popular in the eighteenth century that writers and cartoonists give a suggestion of brawling to quite innocent diversions. This is Ned Ward's description of the City Waits:

> We heard a noise so dreadful and appalling, that we thought the devil was riding or hunting through the City, with a pack of deep-mouth'd hell-hounds, to catch a brace of talleymen for breakfast. At last bolted out from a corner of the street, with an Ignis fatuus dancing before them, a packet of strange hobgoblins cover'd with long frize rugs and blankets, hoop'd round with leather girdles from their cruppers to their shoulders and their noddles button'd up into caps of martial figures, like a knight-errant at tilt and tournament, with his wooden head locked in an iron helmet; one arm'd, as I thought, with a lusty faggot-bat, and the rest with strange wooden weapons in their hands in the shape of clyster-pipes, but as long, almost, as speaking-trumpets. Of a sudden they clapp'd them to their mouths, and made such a frightful yelling that I thought the world had been dissolving, and the terrible sound of the last trumpet to be within an inch of my ears.

Many of Mr. Burke's favourite reporters lay it on with a style as fruity as a Christmas pudding. He has collected some very good passages from swearing-matches; the cabby's tradition goes back to the Elizabethan bargee and ferryman. The only appearance of Dr. Johnson here is in the role of public slanger. In reply to an abusive waterman he is said to have exclaimed, "Sir—under pretence of keeping a bawdy-house, your wife is a receiver of stolen goods."

Besides noisy spectacle and slang, a variety of ingredients have been mixed together in *The Streets of London*. Smollett's prose and Hogarth's paint; Rowlandson and Cruikshank and Pepys; "Nollekens" Smith's engravings of London beggars; photograph and medieval tailpiece; doggerel and ballad—with the cement of Mr. Burke's narrative, they make a lively and original London miscellany.

G. W. STONIER

THE PATTERN OF MATHEMATICS

A Mathematician's Apology. By G. H. HARDY. *Cambridge University Press.* 3s. 6d.

This is an apologia only and not an apologetic autobiography. Dr. Hardy tells us very little about himself. He does not even say when he was born, though internal evidence suggests that 1875 may not be far from the mark. The turning-point in his career was perhaps his discovery, in 1913, of the Indian mathematical genius, Ramanujan, whose death at the age of thirty-three would have been more tragic were it not an established fact (as Dr. Hardy convincingly proves) that mathematicians generally do their best work before middle age. He assumes that he himself, being over sixty, is no longer capable of creative mathematical work. He can no longer "add to mathematics," but only "talk about what he or other mathematicians have done," and it is to this conviction that we owe the present book.

"A mathematician need not now consider himself on the defensive," he claims. But Dr. Hardy in this book is very definitely on the defensive, and his defence of mathematics consists in asserting that it is an art, like painting or poetry. The pleasure derived from it is an aesthetic one. "The mathematician's patterns, like the painter's or poet's, must be beautiful." His remarks about poetry are, however, rather disquieting. To begin with, he uses the name of Rupert Brooke in a context which suggests that he regards him as a supreme representative of poetry.

> Not all the water in the rough rude sea
> Can wash the balm from an anointed King

he also quotes, and asks "Could lines be better and could ideas be at once more trite and false?" The notion that coronation ritual has a permanent effect may be old-fashioned, but it is hard to see why it is "trite," and to stigmatise a mystical doctrine of this kind as "false" seems almost fatuous. But apparently "lines" could, after all, "be better"; for a few pages later he quotes:

> After life's fitful fever he sleeps well

and says that this "seems still more beautiful," because "in this case the ideas have significance and the thesis is sound, so that our emotions are stirred much more deeply."

All this sounds like the comment of one whose contact with poetry is somewhat superficial. The question therefore arises, is mathematics really like poetry, or does Dr. Hardy only think so because he does not understand poetry? An equal difficulty arises when we tackle the problem from the other end. Dr. Hardy gives a series of easy mathematical theorems and we are asked to admit that they are "beautiful" in the way that works of art are beautiful. I see that they are neat and satisfactory, but I cannot say that any of them gives me the kind of rapture that art inspires. This, again, may merely prove that my contact with mathematics is superficial. At the most, it means that I personally do not get aesthetic pleasure from theorems; other people, including Dr. Hardy, may.

Such is the main problem raised by this quiet, slim volume, which reflects on every page the dignity and integrity of traditional Cambridge academic life.

ARTHUR WALEY

"All the Prisoners of War here are blessing you"

The above is an extract from a letter (one of a vast number) received from a British Prisoner of War in the German Prison Camp Stalag XXA, who adds: "I can assure you that the very fine parcels of books and games you have supplied to us are appreciated and have brought endless pleasure to thousands of unfortunate prisoners like myself."

The work of the British Prisoners of War Books and Games Fund is devoted solely to the welfare of the 44,000 British Prisoners of War and to making their lives in the German Prison Camps as bearable as possible. The lot of these men is unenviable. Practically shut off from the outside world, you may be sure that they hear only bad news, if any. It is therefore not difficult to imagine the joy with which the men receive our regular monthly parcels—bringing them new hope and something to occupy their minds (preventing "brain stagnation" is how one prisoner describes it) and above all, the knowledge that *they are not forgotten*.

Will YOU help? **So great is the number of prisoners to whom we are sending regular parcels that additional funds are very urgently required. The generous support of readers of The NEW STATESMAN has already made possible the despatch of thousands of parcels. We earnestly ask that this support shall be continued and that readers who have not yet given will send a donation to help on this work. Cheques, large or small, Postal Orders, Bankers' Orders for regular monthly or quarterly remittances, proceeds of collections or functions, will all be most thankfully received and acknowledged. We are also at all times pleased to receive and answer inquiries on any subject concerned with Prisoners of War.**

Below is a summary of some of the activities of the Fund. Please retain for reference or pass to any person interested.

● **BOOKS**

Every known prison camp has been supplied with sufficient volumes to form the nucleus of a first-class library. All types of books are sent: History, Biography, Travel, Anthologies, Essays, Poetry, Plays, Humour, Fiction in great variety. New books are constantly being added, and all requests from camp librarians are dealt with promptly.

● **HOBBIES**

We receive a large number of requests for books on special subjects and favourite hobbies of prisoners. Recent requests have been for books on: Arts and Handicrafts, Archaeology, Astronomy, Engineering, Gardening and Country Pursuits, Languages, Philately, Photography, all Sports and Games, Natural History and Science, Social and Economic Problems, the Theatre and Screen.

● **BIBLES**

Religious services are held regularly in most of the camps. We have met all requests from camp chaplains for Bibles, Prayer Books (all denominations), Psalters and Hymnals; books on Theological subjects.

● **GAMES**

Indoor games and pastimes of every description have been supplied in large number, including all the popular table games. Also Playing Cards. Equipment for outdoor games has been sent where facilities are available.

● **MUSIC**

Many of the camps now have their own orchestras and bands, for which we have supplied both instruments and music. We have also sent gramophones, records, and most kinds of musical instruments, including bagpipes for Scottish prisoners.

● ***INDIVIDUAL PARCELS***

In addition to our collective parcels to the camps, an important branch of our work is to send *individual parcels* to the prisoners. We keep a card-index on which are entered the tastes and special interests of each prisoner (the information being supplied by the men themselves or their relatives), and each prisoner on our list receives a regular monthly parcel made up in accordance with his tastes. Past experience has shown how eagerly the men look forward to receiving parcels *personally addressed* to them.

NOTE.—Censorship regulations preclude our acceptance of gifts in kind.

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SHORTER NOTICES

Alice in Wunderground: Written and illustrated by MICHAEL BARSLEY. *John Murray.* 2s. 6d.

Those who admired either *Grabberwocky* or the *Ritzkreig Papers* will find their taste tickled by this little book. The first part is a variation on Lewis Carroll and relies (perhaps even a little too much) on the pun as its main weapon. The second part consists of verses, amusing enough but with a real sharpness only when read in conjunction with the illustrations. As an illustrater Mr. Barsley has learnt everything from Thurber; it is a healthy influence for English comic drawing. "The Warning after the Night Before," the Bomb-bore and Thinking out a New Way Home are excellent. The illustration to the safe area dwellers who,

> Inspired by Britain's glorious cause
> With seven maids to do the chores
> Gather round at country teas
> And grouse about evacuees

has that slightest variation of line which gives his Thurberesque a distinctive English flavour.

Twentieth Century Literature. By A. C. WARD. *Methuen.* 7s 6d.

Here is an A.B.C. to the literature of this century. It is no Debrett, for it is not selective, but contents itself with listing the authors, poets, and dramatists of the century in chronological order with brief biographical notes. It is essentially a "beginner's" book, and should prove useful to those visitors here for the duration who might care to improve their knowledge. Mr. Ward gives most space to the traditionalists, to those who established themselves without fuss or public outcry, the good solid authors who will rank with Dickens or Milton, when the names of the upstarts have been long forgotten. He devotes a bare paragraph to Spender, Auden, Day Lewis, MacNeice, and Isherwood. This uncritical but extensive work would provide a useful candle to sixth forms provided schoolmasters can stomach the necessary allusions to sex. Indeed, a useful book to all those who wish to educate themselves with the literature of the last thirty years, and are looking for a starting post. All the names are here, and a comprehensive authors' book list at the end.

Week-end Competitions

No. 576

Set by G. W. Stonier

We offer the usual prizes for the best letter (not more than 250 words) written home by a Londoner who has gone into the country for a few days' quiet.

RULES—

1. Envelopes should be marked with the number of the Problem, in the top left-hand corner, and should be addressed to COMPETITIONS, 10 Great Turnstile, W.C.1. Solutions must reach the Editor by first post on Monday, Feb. 24th.

2. The Editor's decision is final. He reserves the right to print in part or as a whole any matter sent in, whether it be awarded a prize or not. MSS. cannot be returned. When no entries reach the required standard no prize will be awarded.

James Joyce's

ULYSSES

Owing to a misprint in last week's advertisement the impression was given that the above book was available at 5s. The correct price is, of course, 25s. (ordinary edition, large Cr. 8vo), with a de luxe edition at 63s.

the bodley head

RESULT OF COMPETITION No. 573

Set by V. S. Pritchett

Passing a destroyed house the other day, I overheard a man say to an Air Raid Warden: "One wonders what happens to the mice." The usual prizes are offered for the best overheard conversations concerned with the war.

Report by V. S. Pritchett

The last time I set a competition for overheard conversations I am sorry to say that a lot of competitors cheated by sending things they had picked up from the wireless, the music-halls and the papers. Of course, the speakers overheard may themselves be unconsciously quoting. I am sure I have heard this (sent in by Towanbucket) in a Gert and Daisy music-hall dialogue: "'E wants to get married, so 'e's applying for passionate leave." I am equally sure that another of Towanbucket's amusing half-dozen eavesdroppings is genuine; it has the lovely incurableness of human nature: "If there's one warning at night I just rouse one of the children and let the other lie. Then they each have a chance to get some sleep." I entirely believe in Midas's elderly gentleman, who said, after a nearby bombing: "They ought to know it's no good for the foundations of a new house to be shaken up like this." And also D. D. R.'s new light on the relation of the sexes in Wales: "'An reely, I felt kinda funny when she said, 'Have you been in a blitz yet,' an' I 'ad to say no."

"Sright. But we'll orl have our turn, no doubt, an' we'll 'av the laugh of 'er when it comes to invasion, I dare say."

Among the entries was a large number of quotations from terrible boys ("What's going to happen to all these gas-masks after the war, mummy?"), and there were the usual old ladies from *Punch*. Of these I liked Pte. Paynter's pair who, walking through a devastated area, asked, "What were the police doing?" and seeing one house wrecked and its neighbours standing, said before the wrecked house: "Perhaps they were Catholics." I hear the scared yet satisfied hiss of that remark. I ought really to turn over all these replies to Mass Observation. Here are a few of the best:

A lady: "I don't see it. If it's all true about more civilians being killed than soldiers, why do they still make people join the Army?" (Albert Meltzer.) That should be entered for the Femina Vie Heureuse prize.

"It's Hitler. He's nothing but an Austrian, rotten, low-down rat—and if I wasn't in Wigmore Street I'd say something else about him." (Roger Till.)

"Just as soon as we hear them, we leave everything—even his sandwiches for his to-morrow's dinner, though I don't see the good of that—and go to the shelter in the street. But it's that cold and dreary there, you can't see to knit or read, and there's nothing to sit on but what you bring in a hurry, and we don't get on with the neighbours, so after a bit we go home again. They all do in our street."

"But if you don't stay till the raid's over, what's the use of going?"

"Well, when you hear the sireens, you feel nervous. But after you've had a bit in the shelter you're only too thankful to go home to your bed, raid or no raid. That's what they were built for, isn't it?" (R. Setter.)

(Householders are busy putting out incendiaries on the road with sand):

A Warden (who happens to be a Baptist deacon): "Say, you chaps, why aren't you using water?"

A Householder (indignantly): "Man! Is this a time for denominational prejudice?" (Towanbucket.)

In a train during a raid:

Returning one Sunday night from Norfolk, I found myself in a carriage with a very cheery and loquacious little Cockney who had been in the Docks fire. He always referred to Hitler as "McGinty," explaining: "My wife's Irish, you see, so I call 'im McGinty just to annoy 'er relations." Later, when we ran into a raid and a woman kept repeating "O Christ, I wish I was aht of this train!" he consoled her: "Don't chew worry, me gel! You couldn't be in a safer place—safe as 'ouses. They carnt 'it a moving target." (V. H. Porter.)

But I believe the companion bellowing to her deaf friend:

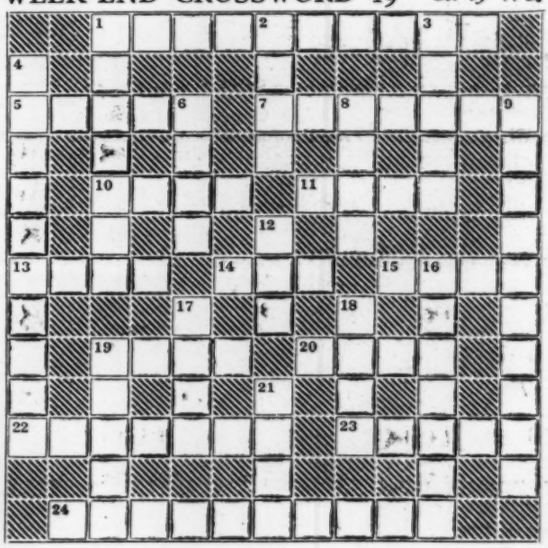
"No, no, no, the French won *last* time." (J. A. Cole.)

In this kind of competition it is impossible to make an order of merit and I therefore propose that the total prize money be divided between:

Pte. Paynter, R. Setter (address please), Towanbucket, Albert Meltzer, V. H. Porter, Roger Till, Midas, and Jan Britton for a phrase which is uttered scores of times every night in pubs, trains, shelters, and comes chiefly, in my observation, after any bad raid: "Well. I think we've abaht got 'im nah!"

WEEK-END CROSSWORD 19

Set by V. S.



The last week's winner is:
Nancie Livingstone, 22 Gloucester Court, Golders Green, N.W.11.

ACROSS

1. Some letters for you, signed by the fairies. (10)
5. Night shifts. (5)
7. Refuse to take steak if it doesn't suit you. (2 hyphen 5)
10. Almost a tennis team—can you beat it! (4)
11. Horse-pistol? (4)
13. Be holy, or anyhow as good as possible. (4)
14. See 12
15. Venerable *Côte de Nuits?* (4)
19. Turns the King crazy. (4)
20 & 17 *rev.* Hair-splitting? (8)
22. If one, indeed! (7)
23. Doing nothing out of place. (5)
24. *Le drapeau* in other words? (5 hyphen 2 hyphen 3)

DOWN

1. *rev.* If nervous about the result—scratch. (7)
2. GroundS. (4)
3. Late last month. (5)
4. A shade under fourteen pounds. (5 hyphen 5)
6. Hold the horses! (4)
8. Shakespeare's word for an old woman; it's wrong to look it up. (4)
9. .....legally (10)
12 & 14. A yoke of bald bullocks give you the bird. (6)
16. Former nurses? (7)
17. See 20
18. How Gray Turned Into a Poet. (4)
19. King's Evil? (5)
21. *rev.* Dead from taking tonic after tonic. (4)

LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD

Books to the value of Five Shillings may be chosen by the sender of the first correct solution opened. Post solutions to arrive not later than first delivery Wednesday following the date of issue, addressed to "CROSSWORDS," "NEW STATESMAN AND NATION," 10 Great Turnstile, W.C.1.

THE WEEK IN THE CITY

By URBANUS

INDIA REQUISITIONING—TRICKING THE BOND-HOLDER—EXCESS PROFITS TAX

Socialists often make a point of the apparent unevenness in the conscription of capital and labour. The Government professes that compulsion has been and will be applied equally to both, but probably neither the Chancellor of the Exchequer nor the Minister of Labour would care to be cross-examined too closely on their practice of this egalitarian principle. When the Ministry of Supply requisitions a factory and closes down the business of commercial manufacture, capital is probably receiving harsher treatment than the workers, who find munition jobs waiting for them. Again, when the Chancellor of the Exchequer requisitions the American stocks held by British nationals he is applying, perhaps, a greater degree of compulsion to capital than the Minister of Labour does to labour, though the humanities of the two cases are not to be compared. Now comes a new form of requisitioning, which enables the Chancellor of the Exchequer to look the Minister of Labour still more keenly in the eye. The holders of £90 millions worth of India Government dated loans have received notice that their holdings are to be acquired by the British Treasury at market prices and then sold by them to the India Government, whose swollen sterling balances in London are available to foot the bill. The capitalists in this case are accusing the Treasury of sharp practice, for the loans which are being forcibly acquired are not due for repayment. The optional dates vary—covering a period from 1942 to 1960—but most of them are in the fifties, and one of the loans cannot be touched, under the terms of issue, for seventeen years. But the Defence of the Realm (Finance) Regulations ride roughshod over the contracts between lenders and borrowers. They enable the India Government, in effect, to break its bond and to pay off its loans before their time. Of course, holders are receiving in the market price a premium which represents the market valuation of the term of the loan, but they cannot reinvest their money to obtain a similar yield over a similar period.

* * *

It is being asked why the India Government, if it is embarrassed by its large accumulation of sterling in London, did not use its surplus to call its "undated" loans, which are now redeemable at any time. There are £175 millions of these callable undated loans, which could be repaid without any offence to the holders. There are, to be exact, £85 millions of the 3½ per cent. undated loans which could have been singled out for call without any breach of contract. Why, then, did the Treasury go out of its way to commit the sort of crime which the Council of Foreign Bondholders condemns so severely when it is perpetrated by foreign Governments? No one in the City appears to know the answer. The immediate effect of this shock to public financial morals was, of course, a rise in the gilt-edged market, and in particular in the undated India loans. The latter have risen 3 or 4 points. It is expected that the expropriated holders of the dated India loans will reinvest in the undated—the 3½ per cent. now quoted at 98½, the 3 per cent. at 85¼, and the 2½ per cent. at 73½. Why trouble to pick out a dated loan if dates in loan contracts are no longer sacrosanct? Besides, the dated British Government issues will seem dear to an ex-holder of India loans—3 per cent. Funding, 1959–69, being quoted at 99½, and 2½ per cent. Funding, 1956–61, at 92¼—20 points above the price of India 2½ per cent. undated. I would advise, therefore, reinvestment in the undated India loans, especially as the Treasury may be shamed by the outcry and may induce the India Government to use its future sterling balances to call these loans for repayment.

* * *

The City believes that the Excess Profits Tax will be reduced in the next Budget from 100 per cent. to 90 per cent.—some optimists are going for 80 per cent.—with the following provisions: first, that there will be no increase in dividends; secondly, that the 10 per cent. (or 20 per cent.) retained by the company will be invested in Government War Bonds and will be accumulated to form a re-employment fund for the post-war reconstruction. I would regard such a revision as sensible. As it stands at 100 per cent., the Excess Profits Tax is encouraging extravagance and new expenditures, not only in the renewal of tools and equipment, but in salaries, wages and in directors' fees. It is, therefore, an inflationary tax. Further, it penalises the developing concern and prevents the companies which had made losses in the standard period from re-establishing their finances. Labour should support this reasonable amendment, for it will help employment after the war and retard inflation during the war. A further amendment is required to meet the case of the tin mining companies which have been requested to shorten their lives by producing at 130 per cent. of standard to enable the American Government to accumulate a war reserve of tin. By being forced to hand over all profits resulting from this excess production the tin companies are actually suffering a capital levy. If the American Government continues its special purchases of tin, as seems likely, after June 30th this form of capital levy on the tin companies would become even more unreasonable. It would not be surprising if the Chancellor were to make a concession in the case of tin.

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WORKERS' TRAVEL ASSOCIATION LTD.

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Notice of Annual Meeting of Shareholders

The 18th Annual Meeting of Shareholders will be held on Monday, 24th February, 1941, at 2.30 p.m.

at

CAXTON HALL, WESTMINSTER, S.W.1

to receive the Annual Report and Statement of Accounts and other business relating to the Annual Meeting.

No notice will be posted to members but Agenda for the meeting and copy of the Annual Report and Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31st October, 1940, can be had on application by shareholding members to the Registered Offices of the Society at 49 Cannon Street, London, E.C.4.

ERNEST W. WIMBLE,
Secretary and General Manager.